

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING AS A TOOL FOR CONGREGATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

By

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A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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## ABSTRACT

### DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING AS A TOOL FOR CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

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This demonstration project presents Discipleship training as a tool for developing and retaining new members and getting them involved in the work of the church which God has called us to. The words found in Matthew 28:18-20, are often referred to as the Great Commission from Christ. In this passage of Scripture, He tells those that believe in Him to go and make disciples of others and of all the nations. This should be the primary mission of a church. However, there are many challenges in the postmodern environment that detract from this mission. In a congregation of over 3,000 members, it is not easy for new members to become integrated into the ministries of the church. They can feel a sense of isolation. This isolation can lead to them leaving the congregation. The results of this demonstration project showed that Discipleship training is a viable tool for developing and retaining new members.

This project is dedicated to Disciples Present and Future and  
to Those who Teach them.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

For several decades I have attended many worship services in Baptist churches where I have heard the Word of God preached. Then after the preacher concludes his or her proclamation what usually follows is the statement, “The doors of the church are open, the invitation to Christian Discipleship is being extended.” As a small child, I often wondered what that really meant. I later learned that this is a time when people sitting in the congregation who want to join the church are invited to come down the aisle and express their desire to unite with that church. I still wondered what happened to the people after that public process was over and the church closed its doors for that Sunday.

As a Deaconess and later as an ordained Deacon in my local congregation, the Convent Avenue Baptist Church located in New York City, one of my responsibilities was to stand up after the preacher finished preaching and receive those who come down the aisles in response to the invitation to Christian Discipleship. This invitation is reinforced by the message that is printed on the Order of Service for that Sunday which states, “Response to the Sermon, “At the end of today’s sermon, an invitation to Christian Discipleship will be given. You can invite Christ into your life by coming forward. If you are already a disciple of Christ, but not presently a member of a church, you can join our fellowship by also coming forward when the invitation is given.”

There are four ways in which a person can become a member of my local congregation. They are by (1) Baptism, (2) Christian Experience, (3) Letter and (4) by



Restoration. Baptism means the person has to be baptized by full immersion into the water by the Convent Avenue Baptist Church before they can become members. We as Baptists believe that, “Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost; to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, with its effect, in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation;”<sup>1</sup> Christian Experience means that you have been baptized by immersion in the water before coming to this church. Joining by Letter means that you have been baptized previously and was a member of another Baptist congregation and you have a letter from that fellowship stating that information. Restoration means that you were a member of the congregation previously but you have not continued to be an active member in good standing. Being a member in good standing means that you have attended worship services as often as possible and that you are up to date on your financial giving to the church.

My responsibilities as a Deaconess and as an ordained Deacon involved taking applicants for church membership into the Deacon’s Room in the back of the Sanctuary and obtaining some basic information which included contact information and the reason why the person came forward to unite with our congregation. This information also included their choice of date and time for new member orientation classes. Four new member orientation classes are required to be completed before new members are fellowshipped into the church and become members of the congregation with all of the

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<sup>1</sup> *The New National Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: National Baptist Publishing Board, 1991), 609.

rights and privileges of other members. I was getting closer to finding out what really happens in the back room and after applicants become full members of the congregation.

As a Christian worker in the church, I have always been interested in Christian Education. This applied whether I was a teenager teaching the children's Sunday school class or the Adult Women's Sunday school class on Women's Day in my previous congregation, the Mount Olive Baptist Church in Fitzgerald, Georgia. My understanding of Christian Discipleship is under-girded by the Scripture found in Ephesians 4:11-13 , "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" matured even more when I became a member of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church.

As a part of my Christian service in my local congregation, I became a teacher in the Foundations for Christian Living Course which is an extended orientation course for new members and other members who feel they need to learn more about how to live the Christian life. This curriculum includes lessons on the following:

- The Church Covenant
- How to Become A Christian and Grow in the Faith
- You and the Holy Spirit
- A Guide to the Study of the Bible
- Steps to Strengthen Your Prayer Time
- Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts
- Your Christian Stewardship
- The Structure of the Church
- Your Christian Mission <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Convent Avenue Baptist Church, *Foundations for Christian Living*, 1996.

## **CHAPTER 1: THE SETTING**

“Upon the hill-top’s graceful heights, grey stones against sky blue there stands a church whose beacon light, shines out o’re Harlem’s view—a church whose walls so brightly glow with faith’s undying flame—where people come to worship God, and praise his Holy Name. O Convent, Our Convent. Thank God for all the things you meant. We hear God’s Word and learn to serve God and his creation.”<sup>3</sup> The church referred to in the lyrics of this song is the Convent Avenue Baptist Church, (Convent Church) which is located at the corner of 145<sup>th</sup> Street and Convent Avenue in the Village of Harlem, USA. The Convent Avenue Baptist church has been in existence for over seventy years and is well known inside and outside of the Village of Harlem, USA.

According to the history of the Convent Church found in its Fiftieth Anniversary Journal, the Convent Avenue Baptist Church was founded on February 4, 1942, by the late Dr. John W. Saunders and a small group of congregants known as the Kingdom Builders. The Convent Church was later incorporated in 1952. The Spirit of the Lord led the seventy-three year-old Dr. Saunders to establish the Convent Avenue Baptist Church at that time. Many pastors in their senior years would have probably been ready to retire, but not Dr. Saunders who demonstrated great faith in God. Dr. Saunders believed like the prophet Nehemiah that the people could accomplish more beyond measure if they had a mind to work.

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Gregory Hopkins, “O Convent, Our Convent,” Convent Anniversary Hymn, 1992.

Dr. Saunders had been the Pastor of Walker Memorial Baptist Church (Walker Memorial) since 1928. In 1939, Dr. Saunders along with some other members of that church allegedly without authorization from the Board of Trustees began negotiations for the sale of the Walker Memorial Church building in order to purchase another church building. The group collected thirteen hundred dollars from various groups in the Church. Allegedly, the money was never turned over to a Trustee. This situation led to the Walker Memorial congregation dismissing Dr. Saunders as Pastor. Dr. Saunders filed a lawsuit against Walker Memorial that dealt with the correct legal process for removing a Pastor of that Church. The law was not crystal clear in this case. This court case is now part of New York Religious Corporation Law. This case made a lasting impression however. The Convent Church does not allow its ministry groups to conduct fund raising activities except for the Children and Youth ministries.

After Dr. Saunders was dismissed from Walker Memorial, he and a small group of congregants called the “Kingdom Builders” started to worship at a place on 132<sup>nd</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York City which served as a dance hall from Monday to Saturday, and then a church on Sunday mornings. Dr. Saunders later learned that the Washington Heights Baptist Church which was located at 420 West 145<sup>th</sup> Street and Convent Avenue was willing to sell their church building to the Kingdom Builders. However the mortgage was more than the Kingdom Builders thought that they could handle. With the help of God and several good friends such as Dr. Charles H. Sears, Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., Dr. O’Clay Maxwell, Sr., Messrs. George H. Simms, Horatio S. Hill and others. The sale price was reduced to \$50,000 and the property was purchased and the Convent Church was established.

Although the congregation was small, they had a mind to work and that's what they did. They paid off the entire amount of the mortgage in approximately three years and three months. On May 27, 1945, they burned the mortgage.

The Church continued to grow and expand. The people of Convent had a mind to work. In a short time other properties such as 354 and 356 Convent Avenue were purchased by the Church.

Dr. Saunders strongly believed that the church should reach out to the community. This was evident by the establishing of a Day Nursery to assist young parents plus the creation of youth groups such as Girl and Boy Scouts, release time classes, vacation Bible School and a Junior Church. On September 18, 1955, Dr. Saunders suffered a stroke which brought his active ministry to an end. He continued to be a strong advocate for the Lord until he passed away on February 19, 1961, in New York Hospital at the age of 92 years old.

After the death of Dr. Saunders in 1961, Rev. Mannie Lee Wilson was elected as the second pastor of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church and assumed the pastorate on May 31, 1961. Reverend Mannie Lee Wilson was affectionately called M.L. Rev. Wilson had previously served as Minister of the Junior Church. Rev. Wilson had also served as supply Pastor for five years when Dr. Saunders took ill in 1955. Under the leadership of Rev. Wilson, the Convent Church grew from 199 to 1500. He initiated several programs which continue to this day. Rev. Wilson was known for his soul stirring sermons. As pastor for twenty years, he wielded great influence in the Harlem community, New York State, the White House and around the world. The Convent Church started to take on the reputation of being a "Preacher's Church." During Rev.

Wilson's pastoral ministry the membership of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church grew to 3,000 persons. The people of Convent continued to work. The church purchased some additional properties which continue to be used for the programs of the church and the community. Rev. Wilson's health started to fail in 1979. Rev. Clarence P. Grant, who had served under Rev. Wilson since 1979, was installed as the third pastor of Convent Church after the death of Rev. Wilson in 1982. Rev. Grant served as pastor of the Convent Church until 2005. During that period of time, he started many programs at the church such as Wednesday Mid-day Chapel at the Crossroads Service, the Prison Ministry, the Homeless Ministry, the Food Pantry, the Saturday Children's Fellowship, the Stephen Ministry, the Ministry of Remembrance, the Betty B. Wilson Learning Center and many others. Pastor Grant's trademark saying was "carry on." He was a humble and quiet man who preached with power and had a real concern for the less fortunate.

Over the years Convent Church has faced many challenges. One of its most significant challenges came in 1999 when Pastor Grant decided that it was time to change to the Church's Constitution and By-laws in part to allow the ordination of women as Deacons. The call and ordination of women as deacons or clergy has been and continues to be an issue that divides denominations and some congregations. There are several arguments for not allowing females to become part of the ordained ministry of Christ. Some of these arguments include the notion that the original Apostles were male and there is no biblical precedent for a woman to serve in these roles. Some conservative denominations also advocate that since family decision-making power is concentrated in the husband, the same should apply in the church. Conservatives generally interpret 1st

Corinthians Chapter 14 as restricting all women's speech in the church. If women are not allowed to speak, then according to this view, they obviously cannot be pastors or priests. I see this as keeping people in bondage. We must look to Jesus and his dealings with males and females as a new paradigm. The paradigm of a household with males and females with equal authority and power must be created. This can only be accomplished through the recognition that the transforming power of Jesus through his Holy Spirit is acting in all of us. The Bible states in Galatians 3:28 (NRSV) that, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

Pressures within our society have been placed on religious organizations imploring them to ban discrimination based on gender. Many organizations have evolved from restricting women, to ordaining them to the ministry. They now choose clergy based on the individual's personality, intelligence, and knowledge regardless of gender. The Scriptures have examples of women as prophets and disciples. These include Miriam, the sister of Moses, Deborah, the prophet-judge, Huldah, a prophet, Dorcas, a female disciple, Euodia, Syntyche and Priscilla, co-workers of the Apostle Paul and Phoebe a deacon of the church at Cenchrea.

The author of *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church*, Letty M. Russell agrees that women should be represented in the ministry. Dr. Russell is somewhat critical of the church because the church does not do all that it can to reaffirm women and provide justice for all. She describes the church as a community of Christ, bought with a price where everyone is welcome. In other words, everything about Christ and his ministry has not been revealed to us yet. I would go beyond that and say that

Jesus was and is an equal opportunity employer regardless of our gender. On the third Sunday of May in 2000, eighteen female Deaconesses were ordained as Deacons of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church under the leadership of Pastor Rev. Clarence P. Grant. Rev. Grant passed away on May 16, 2005.

The Convent Church formed a Pulpit Search Committee. In 2007, that Committee recommended for consideration as Pastor, Reverend Dr. Jesse T. Williams, Jr. By vote of the Church body, he was selected to serve as the new Pastor. The Convent Church installed Dr. Williams as its fourth pastor on September 13, 2007. Pastor Williams brings to the Convent Church that great ability to boldly proclaim the Word of God in a way that is spirit filled and inviting. That is evidenced by the fact that in 2009 one hundred and twenty three persons joined the Convent Church and in 2010, ninety people joined. The mission of the Convent Church is, “to proclaim the Gospel and bring souls to Christ.”<sup>4</sup> Pastor Williams has developed a motto for the congregation which portrays the mission of the church. The motto is “Changed People, Changing the Community and the World for Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

The Convent Church has a unique identity in that it is known for its strong preaching, exceptional music that covers a wide genre, and its many outreach programs. The Church has over sixty organized ministries. Along this line, the Church is organized so that it has a three-faceted approach to ministry inside and outside of the walls of the church. The first facet is the Proclamation ministries. These ministries include the Pastor, the Official Boards, the Administration staff, the choirs, the ushers, and the

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<sup>4</sup> Convent Avenue Baptist Church, *2008 Annual Report* (New York: Convent Avenue Baptist Church, 2008), 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



nurses' unit. The second facet is the educational ministry. The Christian Education Ministry is concerned with the spiritual development of individuals for the work of God's ministry here on earth. It is through Christian education that we come closer to God by reading and studying His Word and thereby establish a personal relationship with God. The Educational Ministry includes the Sunday Church School, the Training and Development ministry which includes The New Teacher's Training program, the Basic Member Development ministry which includes, New Member Orientation and Big Brothers and Big Sisters nurturing ministry, the Children's ministry, the Youth Ministry, the Young Adult Ministry, the Adult Ministry and the Single Adult Ministry. The Service Ministries are the third facet. The Service ministries are concerned with outreach and are organized under the Board of Christian Missions. The ministries that fall under the auspices of the Board of Christian Mission include the Sick and Shut-In ministry, the AIDS Ministry, the Comfort Ministry, the Prayer Ministry, the Health Committee, the Stephen Ministry, the Nursing Home Ministry, the Men's Ministry, the Women's Ministry, the Food Pantry, the Homeless Ministry, the Prison Ministry, the Evangelism Ministry, the Stewardship Ministry, the Audio-visual Ministry, the Yes, We Care Ministry, the Employment Ministry and the Social Action Ministry. The people of Convent Church are continuing to work.

One of the challenges currently facing the Convent Avenue Baptist Church is the retention of new members and getting them involved in the ministry of the church. Another challenge is the issue of gentrification in the community where the Church is located. This needs to be examined in regard to membership development and the integration of non-majority race members into the ministries of the Church.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE**

As an Associate Minister at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church, I still hear the Invitation to Christian Discipleship being extended and sometimes I am the one extending the invitation. Just as many have come down the aisles over the seventy years that the church has been in existence, others continue to come and unite with the church. Many of these persons attend the required new member orientation sessions and are fellowshiped into the Convent Church on the first Sunday of the month. Some never complete the orientation sessions and move on to other venues. Of those who are fellowshiped into the church, some continue to come to worship services and get involved in the ministries of the church while others remain members but not active members. Why are these new members not active in the life of the church? The question becomes why do some new members leave the church after they are fellowshiped?

Since 1942, the Convent Avenue Church has operated with lay leaders playing an important role in carrying out the ministry of the Church. These leaders have been people who have either been selected or have volunteered to lead different ministries in the Church. These lay leaders include the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Sunday Church School Superintendent, Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education, Chairperson of the Board of Christian Mission, President of the Women's Ministry, President of the Men's Ministry, Presidents

of the different choirs and usher boards and other ministry leaders. The people who have served in these capacities over the years have all been unpaid volunteers.

The current congregation of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church has over three thousand members. It has over sixty organized ministries that carry out the work of the church on a volunteer basis. The Pastor and a staff of four paid Associate Ministers provide leadership to the Church.

During 2009, 123 people were fellowshipped as members of the Convent Church. As an Associate Minister of the Church and Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education, I do not see many of these new faces in the organized ministries of the Church or in leadership roles in these ministries. Convent is a church where four generations are operating at the same time. The current leadership must start to prepare other members to take their place. Succession planning must be put in place. As a leader in the Church, I am always looking to mentor new members; however there seems to be apathy when it comes to being active members and leaders in the Church. New members offer many reasons for not wanting to serve and help manage the business of the Church. Some of the more popular ones include, "I am too busy or I don't think I have the training and experience." I believe that we have a responsibility to equip those in the church with the necessary skills to become servants in the Church. Part of this equipping involves helping them understand that as Christians there is a call upon our lives to become servant leaders serving God and others. This project offered training to new members of the congregation so that they could become viable and productive members of the Convent Church. The training that these trainees received helped some of them become

effective servants in God's Church. It gave them a foundation so that they can help make more disciples.

However, I must point out that Discipleship Training is not a panacea for congregational retention and involvement in ministry. It is one of several strategies that can be a very helpful tool, if implemented effectively.

## **CHAPTER 3 PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Goals and Strategies and Assessment**

**Goal 1:**       **To develop an awareness amongst the congregation of the concern that new members are not being integrated into the ministries within the church.**

**Strategy 1:** Meet with the Executive Leadership (the Pastor or Executive Minister and Chair Board of Deacons) and make them aware of the concern regarding new members not being integrated into the ministries within the church.

**Strategy 2:** Meet with the Leadership of the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters and make them aware of the concern regarding new members not being integrated into the ministries within the church.

**Strategy 3:** Develop and distribute an informational flyer to church congregants via an insert in the church bulletin for a morning worship service regarding the concern regarding new members not being integrated into the ministries within the church.

**Evaluation of Goal 1:**

1. The documentation of input from at least two members of the Executive Leadership Team and at least two members of the Leadership team of the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters ministry.
2. The distribution of an informational flyer describing the concern to at least one thousand congregants via the Church Bulletin.

**Goal 2: To gather information from new members on their involvement in existing church ministries and solicit their interest in participating in a Discipleship Training Course.**

**Strategy 1:** I will develop and send out a survey that will be used to obtain information from the new members who have been fellowshipped into the church over the last two years to determine if they are actively involved in any of the ministries of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church. My Site Team will have input into the survey.

**Strategy 2:** I will solicit new members and current members to sign-up for the Discipleship Training Course by mailings to new members, by advertising in the church's echo and on the church's website.

**Evaluation of Goal 2:**

1. Recruit at least ten new members for the Pilot Discipleship Course.
2. The development of a survey that has at least 20% open-ended questions so that qualitative data can be obtained as well as quantitative data.
3. A survey response rate of at least 30% from the new members.

**Goal 3:**        **Conduct a pilot session of the Discipleship Course, which will probably encompass 8-12 weeks of one hour sessions.**

**Strategy 1:** Review and collect any previous discipleship training materials that the Church has previously used and review them.

**Strategy 2:** Conduct a pilot Discipleship Training Course for a minimum of ten new members.

**Strategy 3:** Develop the Discipleship Training Manual as part of this demonstration project and have it approved by the Pastor. Incorporate feedback from the Pilot Discipleship Course into the final version of the Discipleship Manual.

**Evaluation of Goal 3:**

1. The actual development of a Discipleship Training Manual that consists of a minimum of five modules.
2. The actual conduct of the Discipleship course and the completion of the course by at least ten new members who are not involved in any of the Church's ministries

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT**

The first step I took to implement my Demonstration Project was to raise awareness amongst the congregation of the concern that new members are not being integrated into ministries within the church. I met with The Pastor and described my Demonstration Project. He agreed that it was necessary that we examine why people are coming down the aisle to unite with the church; and why if they are fellowshipped they do not get involved in the ministries of the church; and why they sometimes even leave the church. He said that there is a definite need for a Discipleship Course for new members and other members of the church. He said that he was excited about my Demonstration Project and looked forward to the results and impact it will have on the church.

I also met with the Chairman of the Board of Deacons and three other members of the Board of Deacons to discuss my Demonstration Project and how I planned to implement it. The feedback from the Deacon Board and the Deacons present was very positive and that a Discipleship training course was greatly needed because they see people come down the aisles; they interview them; they prepare them for baptism; and they counsel some of them. They also see that many never receive the Right Hand of Fellowship. Even if they are fellowshipped into the church they are not integrated into the ministries of the church. Several of the Deacons recalled how they remembered the



former Foundations for Christian Living Course and how many who completed that Course are still active members in the congregation today and serving in leadership roles.

On April 12, 2011, I met with the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters Ministry group to make them aware of my concern regarding new members not being integrated into the ministries within the church. Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters is a ministry that gets involved with staying in touch with new members after they are fellowshiped into the church. Overall, Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters is doing a good job considering the modern day challenges they have. Some of the challenges are reflected in the comments below:

“Some people work on Sunday and can’t come to church.”

“Some people join the wrong ministry and find out later they joined the wrong ministry”.

“New Members are turned over to Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters after they are fellowshiped into the church.”

“Some new members change their phone number frequently.”

“New Members are more transient today.”

“Some new members come from broken families.”

“Many new members are coming with many needs.”

“People join church for different ministries.”

“Some new members want to choose their own Sunday School Class.”

“No annual fellowship in 2011, because of budget concerns.”

“Prayer is a way to get intro to speak with new members. They are pretty receptive.”

The next step I took to raise the awareness of the concern that new members are not being integrated into the ministries within the church was to distribute an informational letter to the Congregation. This informational letter described the issue and offered the pilot Discipleship Course and solicited their interest in participating in such a course was distributed for two Sundays in the Convent Church's Order of Service. The response was tremendous.

Another goal of my Demonstration Project was to gather information from new members on their involvement in existing ministries of the church and solicit their interest in participating in a Discipleship Training Course. During 2009, one hundred and twenty three people were fellowshipped as new members of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church. During 2010, this number was ninety.

In an effort to obtain information from these new members regarding their involvement in church activities and their interest in participating in a Discipleship Training course, with the Pastor's permission, I contacted the Church Clerk to obtain addresses for the new members. Although, the information was based on contact information that the new members provided to the Deacons and the Church Clerk, the contact information was not 100% up-to-date. I will cover this aspect later in my discussion.

### **Questionnaire Development**

I developed a ten question form with input from my Site Team. The form included two (20%) open end questions. These questions included, educational status, church attendance, what influenced them to join Convent and whether they would be interested in attending a Discipleship Course at Convent. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as an Appendix.

Of the two hundred and thirteen persons fellowshiped into the church in 2009 and 2010, two hundred persons were sent a questionnaire by U.S. Mail on September 29, 2011 and October 7, 2011. The mailing included the questionnaire form and a stamped self-addressed envelope for returning the questionnaire. Ten persons were not sent a questionnaire because they were under the age of sixteen or they were a college student, a minister, in a nursing home, or had left the congregation at the time of the mailing.

The results of the September 29<sup>th</sup> and October 7th, 2011 mailing are as follows:

Total Questionnaires		200	
Questionnaires Returned		36	17.7%
Letters Returned to Sender		22	10.8%

The small number of questionnaire responses received was quite disheartening for me. However, the large number of letters returned to sender was even more disturbing. In this post-modern age the Convent church's membership is more mobile than in previous periods of history. Also, the need for privacy and the requirement for protection of personal information can have an effect on how much contact information is available for our new members and the accuracy of the information that new members are providing to the church clerk via the Deacons.

The answers contained in the thirty-six questionnaires that were completed and returned are as follows:

**Question #3. Education**

Some High School	4
Graduated High School or G.E.D.	9
Attended or Graduated Technical School	0
Finished Two-Year College	4
Attending Two-Year College	1
Finished Four-Year College	11
Attending Graduate School	1
Finished Grad. or Professional School	5
Education (not checked)	1

**Question #4. Which one of the following help influence your joining the Convent Avenue Baptist Church?**

The Worship Service	24
Church's Physical Location	11
The Pastor	28
The Outreach Ministries of the Church	2
Have Family who are Members	5
Have Friends who are Members	9
The Members are Friendly and Hospitable	15
Opportunity for Spiritual Development	18
Heard Worship Service on Internet, Radio or TV	9
Other	4

**Question No. 5. Listed below are several programs and activities of the church. Please check the ones you currently attend or participate in.**

8 AM Sunday Worship Service	17
11AM Sunday Worship Service	25
5PM Sunday Worship Service	2
Wed. Chapel at the Crossroads Service	5
Wed. 1:30 PM Bible Study	6
Wed. 6:30 PM Bible Study	5
Wed. 7:30 PM Prayer Meeting	5
Choir Member	1
Usher Board Member	1
Other Church Group(s) please list	
Business Empowerment Ministry	2
Umoja Ministry	1
Prison Ministry	1
Sunday School	1
Prayer Ministry	1
Men's	1
Progressive	1
Nursery	1

Question No. 6. One of the main responsibilities of the church is to make disciples (followers) for Christ and to prepare them to be involved in the church and the community and to help them nurture their spiritual gifts. Would you be interested in participating in a Discipleship Course that will help you grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ which would be conducted for a period of ten to twelve weeks?

Yes	27
No	7
Not Checked	2

**Question No. 7. If you are interested in attending a Discipleship Course at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church which time would be more convenient for you?**

Sundays 9:30 AM during the Sunday School hour	10
Saturday Mornings at 10AM- 11AM	7
Any evening during the week (6:30 PM- 7:30 PM)	8

**Question No. 8. If you are not interested in attending a Discipleship Course, please explain why?**

**Question No. 10. Would you like to share any comments?**

The following are comments that don't relate to health or schedule or financial issues.

- “Wonderful idea.”
- “Thank you for the Invitation and opportunity to share in this endeavor: more Information as to the start date of the course.”
- “It is a joy to be a member of Convent Avenue Church, and to hear and receive the “words” of God delivered by Pastor Williams and others.”
- “Thank you.”
- “I am confused about a lot of things in Bible and at the services.”
- “Will this be offered on-line?”
- “I would like to be more involved in the church and walk closer with the Lord.”
- “I look forward to it.”
- “I don't like your survey.”

Several reasons were given for not being interested or being available to attend a Discipleship Course at Convent Avenue Baptist Church. These reasons included caring for family members, financial issues and schedule issues

After analyzing the data from the Questionnaires from the September 29<sup>th</sup> and October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011 mailings and due to the small response number, I looked at a new strategy for getting new members to sign up for the Discipleship Course that was being prepared. I prepared a full page insert for our Church Echo, which is an insert to our Order of Service. I also solicited my Pastor's help by having him announce the course from the pulpit during the time he made Pastoral Observations. The insert explained the Discipleship Course and the fact that is a part of my Doctor of Ministry Studies. It requested those who were interested in participating in the Course and receiving a Certificate of Completion at the end of the course fill out the attached slip and place it in the Offering Basket or give it to an Usher. The insert was placed in our Order of Service for Sunday, January 8, 2012 and Sunday, January 15, 2012. The Discipleship Course was advertised to start on Sunday, February 5, 2012 at 9:30 A.M. to 10:40 A.M.

The response to the insert in the Echo was tremendous. I had planned for about twenty-five responses and received one hundred and eight responses. The responses came from members who joined the Convent Church during the years 1945 through 2012. In an effort to reach the new members who had indicated their desire to participate in the course, I offered the course initially to those members who joined the church in 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011. This represented 32 students. The goal is to offer the course to the next prospective students in October 2012 and then in February 2013. Two or three more sessions would cover all of those who expressed a desire to attend and

would also allow the church the opportunity to offer the class to the members who joined in 2012.

The start date of the first Discipleship Class was moved from February 5, 2012 to February 26, 2012, because of my personal schedule. On February 20, 2012, letters were mailed to 35 students for the February 26, 2012 Discipleship Class. The mailing also included an Attachment that asked the students to come prepared to discuss the three questions below:

1. Why do you want to be in this Discipleship Course?
2. What will be your greatest challenge in completing this course?
3. Are you committed to completing this course?

On Sunday, February 26, 2012 the first Discipleship Class using the modified MasterLife Curriculum commenced. This modified curriculum consisted of using the text, *MasterLife: Developing a Rich Personal Relationship with the Master* by Avery T. Willis, Jr., and Sherrie Willis Brown, along with some additional information incorporated into the handouts. Each student was given a copy of the text to read and use for the ten-week session. At the end of the session, the books were taken up and will be used for future students who participate in the Discipleship class. Some students found the book so useful, that they purchased their own copy for future use. The main teacher was the writer of this paper. A Minister and a Deacon of Convent Church taught three of the sessions.

Twenty eight students showed up for the first class. Over a period of three weeks four students withdrew from the class for various reasons. The class size was finalized at 24 students. These twenty four attended classes for ten weeks starting February 26, 2012

through April 29, 2012. Several students missed one class for personal reasons. For those students, written make-up work in the form of questions was required for successful completion of the course. A copy of the make-up questions is attached as an Appendix.

On April 29, 2012 the last day of the course, a course evaluation form was passed out to the students and they were asked to complete it in order to help improve the course for the next group of students. It was not mandatory to complete the questionnaire or to provide your name. The questionnaires were collected from the students by one of the students and placed in an envelope and then given to me, in order to provide some form of confidentiality.

On Sunday, May 20, 2012, during the 11 A.M. service Certificates of Completion were presented to the twenty four members who completed the ten week Discipleship Course at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church by the Senior Pastor. The participants receiving the certificates expressed their joy in completing the class and receiving the certificate of completion.

Some of the comments from the evaluation forms are as follows:

“I have reached a higher level of Spiritual Maturity! Praise God!!!”

“The course inspired me to want to learn more and the commitment of attendance kept me focused. We could have had a few more weeks, months, continual learning.”

“I found that the session leaders of this class were knowledgeable and helpful to me. They were informative and patient. They made me feel eager to study God’s Word.”



One of the recommendations going forward to the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters Ministry is that new members are assigned a Big Brother or Sister before they are fellowshipped.

From an examination of the statistics on new members from 2009 and 2010, specifically in the area of how many came down the aisle to unite with the church and how many were actually fellowshipped into the Convent Church, one can see that the time period between the application for membership and the completion of the four new member Orientation classes is critical. There has to be a lot of follow-up with the convert during that period of time. I can speak from my personal experience. When I came down the aisle in January 1984 to join the Convent Church, I was already a Christian and was joining by Christian Experience. But there were things I wanted to know about Convent—specifically what were the names of the different choirs, who should I speak to about joining one of the choirs, and how long did I have to be a member before I could join one of the choirs. I completed my four new member orientation classes and had the opportunity to meet several other new members who were completing their classes as well. I still stay in touch with some of those members today. I was fellowshipped into the church on the first Sunday in February 1984. I was assigned a Big Brother, who was a Deacon at Convent at the time. The Spiritual Big Brother and Big Sister Ministry's mission is to assist new members in becoming acclimated to the congregation and church environs by pairing them with a long time member who can answer questions and encourage them in their spiritual walk with Jesus the Christ.

My Big Brother called me on Saturday mornings to make sure that I was coming to church on Sunday. He also answered my questions about the choirs. This experience

worked out well for me. On the other hand there were a couple of people in our new members' class that I did not see fellowshipped into the church. Something happened during that period between completing the membership form and the completion of the four new-member Orientation classes and the time for them to be fellowshipped into the church. I believe that follow-up with those who are applying to unite with the church is critical, especially when these applicants are new believers in Christ, i.e., new converts. They have not had the spiritual experiences of a believer who has already been a member of another church and served in that church. Today many of those joining churches have not been a member of a church before. A study from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life says, "The number of Americans who do not identify with any religion continues to grow at a rapid pace. One-fifth of the U. S. public and a third of adults under 30-are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentage ever in Pew Center polling."<sup>6</sup>

#### **Recommendation One:**

A recommendation going forward to the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters Ministry is that new members are assigned a Big Brother or Sister immediately after completing their application for membership into the church. This would give the Big Brother or Big Sister an opportunity to walk with the convert through the new member orientation sessions. It would provide an opportunity for the convert to be mentored prior to being fellowshipped into the church. It would also provide that person-to-person contact with the convert so that they would not feel like they are isolated and no one cares about them. Anyone who has tried to join an organization has had an occasion

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<sup>6</sup> The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life " 'Nones' on the Rise," <http://www.pewforum.org/unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx> (accessed January 27, 2013).

where they had many questions they would like to ask, but not in a large setting. The individual assignment of a Spiritual Big Brother or Big Sister would afford the convert the opportunity to ask those questions without feeling embarrassed. The Big Brother or Big Sister could also provide that spiritual guidance and share their experiences when first coming to live and follow in the footsteps of Jesus the Christ. This early assignment of a Spiritual Big Brother or Big Sister is one of the strategies for retaining new members.

### **Recommendation Two:**

Another recommendation for the retention of new members is that a New Member's Coordinator be assigned by the Pastor to work with the applicants for membership into church. This would provide an avenue for accountability when it comes to what happens between application for membership, the four Orientation classes and the fellowshiping of new members. This New Member's Coordinator would work with the Deacons, the Church Clerk and the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters to insure that all of those who came down the aisle and are serious about uniting with the Convent Church get through the new member Orientation classes and get fellowshiped into the Church. The major portion of the Coordinator's work would be reaching out to the new Members after they have come down the aisle to unite with the church. This would cover that gap of time before being fellowshiped into the church. The New Member Coordinator can function with or without the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters executing Recommendation One. Later this New Member Coordinator's responsibility could be expanded to include Basic Membership Development. Basic membership development would include assisting all members of the congregation and offering them

opportunities to get involved in the ministries of the church. This would give that personal attention aspect to member development in a large church setting.

### **Recommendation Three:**

A strategy for retention of new and existing members in the local church is the development and implementation of a Christian Education Ministry Discipleship focused curriculum.

Discipleship training is a fundamental responsibility of the Christian church. Christ gave His disciples the mandate to multiply by making more disciples. He gave this mandate specifically in the Scriptures in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-49 and John 20:21. Making disciples involves getting others to become believers in Christ Jesus, however, it doesn't stop there. It also involves being committed to Christ and developing a deep relationship with Him, through prayer, study of the Word of God, worship, fellowship and service. It is through prayer and study that we can come into a knowledge of what God requires of us as his disciples. Therefore, I believe that a vibrant and effective and varied Christian Education ministry is essential for Christian believers. The implementation of this Demonstration Project and my own personal Christian experience in leadership and teaching roles reinforced my vision regarding a varied Christian Education curriculum. The following outline represents my recommended Christian Education Discipleship Curriculum for a church. Some of these activities are already in place in my local church. They are denoted by an asterisk.

### **Course Level 101 - New Member Orientation \* (4 Sessions required)**

Session 1	Our Salvation
Session 2	Church Ordinances
Session 3	What It Means to be a Member
Session 4	Growing in Christ

Membership Certificate Awarded after completion as part of Fellowship package

**Course Level 102 – Discipleship Course** (12 Sessions) MasterLife modified

<b>Topics Covered:</b>
The Disciple's Cross
The Disciple's Personality
The Disciple's Victory
The Disciple's Mission

Certificate of Completion Awarded after completion of Discipleship Course

**Course Level 103 – Evangelism Course \*** (13 Sessions)

**Course Level 200 – Foundations for Christian Living** (Spiritual Growth) (13 Sessions)

<b>Topics Covered:</b>
The Church Covenant
How to Become A Christian and Grow in the Faith
You and the Holy Spirit
A Guide to Study of the Bible
Steps to Strengthen Your Prayer Time
Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts
Your Christian Stewardship
The Structure of the Church
Your Christian Mission

**Course Level 300 – Advanced Christian Education Courses**

<b>Teacher Training *</b> (Oct. – May)
Articles of Faith
Church History
Introduction to Theology
Christian Ethics
Introduction to the Old Testament
Introduction to the New Testament
Individual Books of the Bible
Christian Leadership

**Electives:**

Robert's Rules of Order
Strategic Planning
Church Finances

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **VOLUNTEERISM AND LAY MEMBER PARTICIPATION IN THE BAPTIST CHURCH**

The Baptist Church over the years has been able to carry-out the work of ministry through the education and empowerment of its members to work as servants and servant leaders. The majority of those serving in the Baptist Church are volunteers. Over the years this has seemed to work with some level of success. However, in the twenty-first century challenges such as technology, economic depression, the generation gap, multiculturalism and general apathy have had an impact on volunteerism in the Baptist Church.

Bill Hybels in his article, challenges “The Seven Myths of Volunteerism” <sup>7</sup> in the following seven categories:

- 1. There aren’t enough volunteers.** There are a lot of people who are potential servants in your church. You have to identify them and why they are not serving and seek solutions to get them to serve. I agree that there are enough potential servants in the church. We should reach out to them in various ways.
- 2. Volunteers are only capable of doing the busy work of the church.** In some churches the elders are responsible for the spiritual growth of the church. Trustees are involved with construction, legal matters and large sums

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<sup>7</sup> Bill Hybels, “The Seven Myths of Volunteerism,” <http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/articles/2006/060403.html> (accessed January 27, 2013).

of money. I believe that volunteers are capable of doing more than busy work in the church.

3. **Volunteers are free help.** Volunteers offer an enormous amount of help but they are not free, because they need and deserve competent leadership, ongoing development, training and the tools to do their job. I know that volunteers are not totally free of charge, but they can be very cost effective in the church.
4. **Most volunteers want to serve in one role for a lifetime.** In healthy high functioning churches, staff and volunteers stay in consistent dialogue about how it's going with the volunteer and whether the work still seems like a good fit. I have mixed feelings about this myth, based on what I have seen in my local congregation where we have three year term limits for a majority of officers, but some officers are not ready to leave office after three years. This could be helped with a mentoring program for new officers.
5. **Volunteers are not interested in training or development.** Volunteers generally speaking, love getting a little better at stuff. I believe that most volunteers are anxious for training but they also want to make sure that the training is worthwhile.
6. **Volunteers need encouragement from heaven but they really don't need much encouragement from anyone on Earth.** If you are not thanking volunteers every day and blessing them and encouraging them, you're missing a tremendous opportunity to fire up someone who really deserves being fired up. I believe that encouragement and thank you goes a long way.

**7. Volunteerism is a one-way deal - all output, no returns, no rewards.**

Volunteerism done right, volunteerism done biblically, wisely, and in the power of the Holy Spirit will not diminish the quality of a person's life. It will do precisely the opposite! Volunteerism done right will dramatically and often radically, positively transform a person's life. Even if all of these myths about volunteerism are debunked, there are still other challenges to volunteerism in the local Baptist church.

This demonstration project looked at the new members over the last couple of years in my congregation to ascertain their involvement in ministry activities in the congregation and their interest in obtaining discipleship training as a means to become more involved volunteers in the congregation. Ministry involvement by volunteers in the local congregation is not without challenges.

Technology such as the Internet can play a role in whether or not people actively participate in ministry in the local congregation. The Internet has even influenced whether or not people attend church often in my local congregation. It was only about six years ago when Convent Avenue Baptist Church started making the 8 AM and 11AM Sunday Worship services available over the Internet. Many of the members of Convent listen to the services on the Internet when they are unable to attend the service in person. While they are hearing the service, it does not provide for that in-person fellowship where people greet you and get to know you and are more inclined to ask you to participate in church activities. Technology has also changed the way in which we communicate information in our Christian Education and Bible Study classes.



PowerPoint presentations and video clips are often used in the conduct of these classes. I believe that this is very useful for visual learners.

Another challenge to volunteerism and lay participation in ministry activities is the state of the national economy. Since 2008, the gross domestic product (GDP) which is an indicator for the economy has shown no real growth. Members of my local congregation and community are not immune to the effects of the economic downturn in the United States. You only have to look at the long lines for the Church's food pantry and the scarce quantities of food on the pantry shelves to see a real impact of the economy on individuals and families. Metropolitan New York pantries are also experiencing the same situation. Too many people are not able to provide food for themselves or their family. A lack of necessities force people to concentrate on keeping mind and body together; while not always concentrating on their soul. This applies to church members who have a myriad of responsibilities inside and outside of the church as well.

Another challenge to lay participation in the church is the generational gap. This gap in Baptist Churches, as well as my local congregation, is real. It's like the elephant in the middle of the room that no one wants to acknowledge. "Historically, four generations often exist together, interlaced in a particular moment of time: young, adult, mature and senior. Today these generations are called the Bridgers, the Busters, Boomers, and Builders."<sup>8</sup> (Footnote page 10) These generations all have different views on what role the church should play in their lives and what role they should play in the life of the church. Understanding these views and trying to minister to them in such a

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<sup>8</sup> Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 10.

way that these generations can learn together and work together for an effective ministry is a challenge in the church setting where volunteerism is the rule rather than the exception. “Those who range in age from the late fifties and up can be called the Builders; the Boomers are those who are in their late thirties to mid-fifties; young adults in their twenties to late thirties are the Busters, and those younger than twenty are the Bridgers.”<sup>9</sup>

Although, the age of church members change and the age make-up of the church can change, God’s mandate for us in the church is to make disciples and to teach them. The Bible is clear about that in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

The challenge is how to carry out this mandate which doesn’t change when the soldiers in the church change. Strategies and approaches are needed to enlist the involvement of the soldiers—members in the church to become engaged in the continuing study of Christian education and eventually become members of church. Groups doing ministry have different approaches and strategies to the army that is the church. This demonstration project is focused on discipleship training as a core strategy. Disciples are not only followers of Christ, but are also learners. The church has a responsibility to not only make disciples but has a responsibility to train and develop them as well. This responsibility is called out in the “Great Commission” Scripture in Matthew 28:18-20. “Yet, we have subtly and tragically taken this costly command of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 15.

Christ to go, baptize, and teach all nations and mutated it into a comfortable call for Christians to come, be baptized, and listen in one location.”<sup>10</sup> Chan’s statement is so representative of what I have seen in several Baptist churches, where the members are content to baptize and give new members the right hand of fellowship for inclusion into the church, but they are not making a concerted effort to train them as disciples that can make other disciples. If you don’t train disciples, they will not be confident in making other disciples. Therefore, training of disciples in the Christian church is a paramount responsibility in order to carry out Jesus’ Great Commission.

A large amount of the postmodern literature on disciple-making is written by authors who have had some connection and experience with such parachurch groups as Navigators, which is an international ministry that is focused on disciple making. “The Navigators ministry began in 1930’s, when a young California lumberyard worker caught a vision. After seeing the benefits of basic discipleship principles in his own life, Dawson Trotman wanted to teach them to others echoing the call of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:2: And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others.”<sup>11</sup> Through my research, I found that LeRoy Eims, author of *“The Lost Art of Disciple Making”*, and Walter A. Henrichsen, author of *“Disciples Are Made Not Born,”* are authors who have been affiliated with Navigators and whose focus is on Discipleship and making disciples. They believe that we are not making disciples. Other authors such as Greg Ogden in his book, *Transforming Discipleship*, writes, “There is an evident discipleship deficit in our

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<sup>10</sup> Francis Chan, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: David Cook, 2012), 7.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.navigators.org/us/aboutus/history>

churches and ministries that we know needs to be addressed, but we are not sure how to do so.”<sup>12</sup> The church needs to pay more attention to discipleship in order to carry out Christ’s mandate. I believe that although, there is a discipleship deficit, the news is not all bad. Several curriculums for making and training and making disciples exist and can be utilized effectively to make disciples who will in turn make other disciples.

It is this following Christ and discipleship responsibility that Dietrich Bonhoeffer talks about when he says, “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. Discipleship means adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship.”<sup>13</sup> The training of disciples is very important and must have a curriculum that helps the disciple to develop as a whole person in God and to rely upon God. “Discipleship is an opportunity to tap the infinite resources of God. It is our chance to give our lives significance rather than mediocrity. In discipleship we are not doing God a favor. He is doing us a favor.”<sup>14</sup> God is God all by Himself and He doesn’t need our help. We need His help every day. We need to be believers in Him that are disciplined and real disciples that practice a disciplined life. That is why the *MasterLife* curriculum for this Demonstration project was the best curriculum.

Multiculturalism is another challenge in some Baptist Churches. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., made the observation that the most segregated hour in America is the hour for most worship services in America. “With both immigration and interracial

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<sup>12</sup> Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 16.

<sup>13</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 64.

<sup>14</sup> Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born: Helping Others Grow to Maturity in Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: David Cook, 1988), 31.

marriages increasing our total ethnic population now numbers over 100 million.<sup>15</sup>

Church leaders must recognize these facts and prepare strategies to address them.

Homogeneous churches of the past will no longer be able to serve the multicultural parishioners of today. Rev. Ken Davis in his article on Multicultural Church Planting Models describes the following multicultural church models: (1) The Multi-congregational Model where multiple worship services designed for the needs of a cultural group are established, but the congregations all contribute to the up-keep of the church. I don't believe this is a multicultural church. I believe that a true multicultural church is one where differences in race and ethnicity are incorporated into a single worship service where all kinds of worshippers participate thereby establishing a stronger witness for Christ. Ephesians 4:1-16, talks about the church as the body of Christ and our oneness in Christ. Our different ethnicities or races cannot destroy this oneness we as believers have in Christ. (2) The Multilanguage Satellite Model where congregations meet at different times at different locations around the city. These satellite congregations can benefit and receive support from the main church. (3) The Cell-Celebration Model where numerous house groups are started but their members also attend a weekly or bi-weekly celebrative worship service either at a central campus or rented hall.<sup>16</sup> Regardless of the multicultural model used, churches must be deliberate in their planning for a multicultural church that meets the needs of its parishioners and the community. The Southern Baptist at their convention in June 1999 launched a multicultural network to advocate and facilitate the development of multicultural

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<sup>15</sup> Rev. Ken Davis, "Multicultural Church Planting Models," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* (Spring 2003): 114-127.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

churches as a critical strategy for reaching American cities. Because urban America is increasingly multicultural, to reach these cities multicultural churches are necessary, said Charles Lyons, pastor of the multicultural Armitage Baptist Church in Chicago.<sup>17</sup>

The Convent Church is predominantly African-American. However, several members who have recently joined the church are of different ethnicities. They include Caucasians, Hispanics and West Indians. The church has to be able to minister to the needs of all of its members regardless of ethnic origin. Convent has established the Umoja ministry which coordinates our outreach to foreign visitors. This ministry utilizes the gifts and abilities of several members that are of different ethnicities. Our greetings are sometimes done in several languages. This is a good start, but more needs to be implemented in this area so that non-African-Americans can grow to their full potential in Christ at the Convent Church.

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<sup>17</sup> James Dotson, "Multicultural Church Network formed to reach America's cities," <http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc99/news16.htm> (accessed January 27, 2013).

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE GREAT COMMISSION**

### **EMPOWERING LEADERS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

“Christianity is unique among the religions of the world in that it consists not of men seeking God, but God seeking men.”<sup>18</sup> Christian discipleship has its foundation in the New Testament, specifically in the Gospel According to St. Matthew Chapter 28, verses 18-20. This pericope of Scripture with its mandate has been acted upon for centuries by Christian churches to various degrees. In the post-modern world, disciples are still being made. It is this text that is commonly used by Baptist churches to promote its internal and external outreach to people who need to be converted to Christianity and become disciples, as well as to those who are already Christians but need a new place to worship where they can be nurtured and trained to be disciples of Jesus. This should be a major part of the mission of the church. “Churches that don’t understand Matthew’s version of Jesus’ Great Commission are much like an oceangoing vessel that is plowing through fog-enshrouded, iceberg-infested waters without navigation equipment.”<sup>19</sup> I believe that this statement is very appropriate for today’s environment. Many churches have lost this focus. Some churches are more concerned with mortar and bricks than making disciples. Jesus’ mandate was for the church to make disciples.

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<sup>18</sup> Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications, 1988), xx.

<sup>19</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Successful Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 7.

The mission of the church is spelled out in Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) along with Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:21, Acts 1:8 and II Corinthians 5:19. This mission is Christ's mission. If a church doesn't carry out Christ's mission, their purpose is questionable. When we look at the Scripture passages above, we can use the Who, What, When, Where and How of writing to examine Jesus' mission. The Who he is referring to is Disciples. The What is referring to Go and make disciples or be witnesses. The Whom refers to all nations or all creation. The How refers to baptizing them, teaching them and preaching forgiveness with power. The Where refers to all the world, beginning in Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria and the whole earth.<sup>20</sup>

Tradition has a lot to do with how the church views its mission. Dr. Aubrey Malphurs believes that a church's driving values will determine its resultant mission. For instance, if pastoral care is your driving value, your resulting mission will be caring for people. He goes on to point out other driving values and resulting mission as follows:<sup>21</sup>

Driving Values	Resulting Missions
Pastoral Care	Caring for People
Scripture	Teaching the Bible
Evangelism	Evangelizing Lost People
Worship	Worship God
Family	Ministering to Families

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<sup>20</sup> Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 16.



Dr. Malphurs goes on to point out that the Shepherd's role came out of the Puritan's understanding. The teaching of the Bible came out of the Reformer's tradition and the Evangelizing of lost people from the Baptist Church in the first part of the twentieth century. The worshiping God tradition came from classical and liturgical churches. Many churches in the postmodern world try to combine many of the driving values and don't necessarily focus in on discipleship making. They spread themselves too thin. I believe that if the church has an effective disciple-making program of study, it will help the church to become effective in the other driving areas of ministry.

My view of what the church is and its mission has changed dramatically since my childhood days in the South. When I was a child, the church was just a building where people who believed in Jesus met for worship, prayer, preaching and teaching. There was more emphasis placed on the physical building than the human condition. After my Christian development in my local congregation in New York City and after attending seminary, I know that the church is wherever Christ is. Christ can be found in the Holy Scriptures, the preaching, the Lord's table, among the poor and other places in the world.

The New Testament gives us several examples of leaders who shared their leadership abilities and therefore enabled their subordinates (disciples) to gain the necessary knowledge and experience so that they could advance the work of God. Some of these leaders include: Paul, Peter and others. Of course the leader and disciple maker par excellence is Jesus, the Christ.

The Gospel of Matthew in Chapter 10, verse 14 also describes Jesus sending out the twelve disciples to do ministry in His Name and with His power. It is in the twenty-eighth Chapter of Matthew where before Jesus sent out His eleven remaining disciples

into a mountain of Galilee, He gives the Great Commission in other words to command them to go and make disciples for Him. “The mission Jesus conducted during His life in Israel among the Jews is now expanded to all nations.” <sup>22</sup>

The Holman Bible Dictionary defines church as, “the term used in the New Testament most frequently to describe a group of persons professing trust in Jesus Christ meeting together to worship Him, and seeking to enlist others to become His followers.” This group of followers shares a special relationship with God and themselves. In this relationship there is dependence on each other to accomplish the mission of God through each other. There is also a way for the followers to receive spiritual support, forgiveness and love from God. There also exists a real concern for the poor, downtrodden and weary.

The First Testament concept of church developed when the tribes of Israel were in captivity and God’s people became a religious community similar to the idea of what church is in the New Testament. During their captivity in Babylon, the Jews were not able to worship in the temple at Jerusalem. To overcome this problem they developed the concept of the synagogue. The word synagogue (synugagn) means “gathering.”

In the New Testament, the Greek word used to refer to the church is *ekklesia* which means “assembly or congregation.” *Ekklesia* comes from the Greek verb, which means, “to call forth or call out.” This is a term that is used several times in the book of Acts and is translated “assembly” in the King James Version Acts 19:32; 39-41. In Acts 7:38 it is translated as “church” and refers to the children of Israel, which was an image of the Christian church.

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<sup>22</sup> Stevan L. Davies, *New Testament Fundamentals* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1994), 130.

In his book, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Daniel L. Migliore states that the church in the New Testament, the ecclesia refers to the new community of believers gathered to praise and serve God in response to the ministry of death and resurrection of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament presents many images of the church. Four of these images are the people of God, the people of God as servant, the body of Christ and a community of Spirit. The church as people of God can be found in 1 Peter 2:9 (NRSV) which states, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you might proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” This text describes the people of God as being called out and connects the First Testament people with the Second Testament people in that they are God’s own people. The people of God as a servant people are in alignment with God as servant of His people. Mark 10:45 states, “For the ‘Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and To give his life a ransom for many.” As people of God we are to be servants serving in an unselfish manner. We have the tasks of being co-laborers with Christ and also witnesses for him.

The church is also called the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:27) Christ is the head of the church, the body. (Colossians 1:18) All of the believers and followers of Christ make up the body. Therefore the members make up the body. This imagery shows the interdependence on each other in the body of Christ. The members have different gifts that are given to them by the Holy Spirit for the edification and growth of the body, the church.

The church as a new community shows God at work creating a new community where equality for all exists. There will be no discrimination because of gender, race, color or creed. This community will be empowered by the Holy Spirit. The church today is supposed to be an example of this new community here today. It is supposed to be a promise of the kingdom to come. Therefore the church can be defined in relationship to the Kingdom of God.

The essential characteristics of the church according to the Nicene Creed are: “one, holy, catholic and apostolic.” One represents unity. “The unity of the church is a unity of love that enters into relationship with others and finds its identity in relationship.”<sup>23</sup> This unity is celebrated through Communion (The Lord’s Supper). Holiness does not mean assuming an attitude of superiority. “The church is holy by participation in the holy love of God. God’s love is holy not because it holds itself aloof from sinners and strangers but because it embraces them without reservation. This is God’s holiness and justice revealed in Jesus Christ: that God justifies, accepts, and loves sinners despite their unworthiness.”<sup>24</sup>

Catholicity means that the church is universal. It exists everywhere in the world at all times. The word church can designate either local assemblies of Christians or the universal Christian community. Apostolic does not mean having a line of succession from the Apostles. It means that every baptized believer has a responsibility to be a witness for Christ.

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<sup>23</sup> Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding, An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 202.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

The basic feature of the Christian church is its devotion to Jesus Christ. Jesus established the church (Matthew 16:13-20) and created the foundation for its existence through his death and resurrection. Therefore, it is Christ's position as Lord that governs how others are admitted to the church. Persons who gain admission to the church have placed their trust in Christ (Acts 2:37-42). They have openly confessed their sins (Romans 10:9-13). They have been baptized (Acts 10:44-48). This baptism by immersion represents the burial and resurrection of Jesus through going down in the water, watery grave and rising up as a new creature in Christ. Some churches don't baptize infants. They only baptize at an age when a person can make a personal statement of faith and confession. Joining the church makes you a full member and entitles you to participate in the observance of the Lord's Supper, worship and other activities of the church.

Worshippers in the early church demonstrated their love for Christ and for one another. This worship was different from the pagan worship in Greece and Rome. Christian worship edifies Christ and strengthens the believers present. Pagan worship edifies the gods or goddesses. Today's worship spans the spectrum from solemn to very lively and participatory. The tone of worship in my own local congregation has gone from solemn to being more participatory. As far as I am concerned, Christ should always be the center of worship and everything should be done decently and in order.

Just as God sent His Son on a mission, He has also sent His church on a mission. This mission involves the proclamation of the Gospel of God's love, grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. The mission of the church is to share in God's ministry of reconciliation to the whole world. We are called to be disciples of Christ and to develop others as

disciples. “A disciple is a learner-one who is on a quest to make his life all that God would have it be.” <sup>25</sup>

Following Jesus is like taking a journey that involves different stages. Robert E. Webber in his book, *Journey to Jesus* discusses the stages. The first stage is that of seeker, who comes to the church looking for Jesus and looking to follow him. If the seeker accepts Jesus, he or she is converted. This reminds me of the Sunday morning worship service at my local church when the invitation to Christian discipleship is extended and the seekers come down the aisle publicly to accept Jesus. After the seekers are interviewed, we pray with them and ask Jesus to strengthen, them for their Christian journey that is just starting.

The next stage is that of hearer. During this time they attend a four week orientation class where they are instructed on such basic topics as salvation, the Bible, baptism and the Lord’s Supper. This is to make disciples of the new converts. The next rite is that of baptism. This stage has the new convert as a kneeler who is being spiritually formed as a disciple for Christ by following in his footsteps of baptism. The fourth phase involves the incorporation of the new convert as a member of the faithful through the rite of communion. We receive these new converts as members of the church fellowship (the faithful) through the extension of the right hand of fellowship. These new disciples need to be led to get involved in the ministry of the church and to discover their spiritual gifts. There is a responsibility that falls upon the church that involves not only making disciples through worship and evangelism, but the responsibility to nurture them as well because they are at different stages of spiritual development. The church must

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<sup>25</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples are Made not Born*, 23.

have a true mission of evangelism, not just be a place where people come on Sunday to worship and then go home unchanged and uninvolved.

The Gospel meets and addresses itself to the complete needs of humanity, both spiritual and physical, both personal and social. The mission of the church begins at our door and extends to every corner of the world wherever people are un-reconciled to God. Therefore, the church is here, there and everywhere.

The church over the years has been able to carry out the work of God through the empowerment of its members as servant leaders. Every member—whether new or existing—should be given the chance to develop their spiritual gifts through Christian education and the exercising of their gifts in ministry in the church. I believe that every church member has an obligation as part of their faith to serve God, the church and humankind. Serving or works will not save Christians, but it shows our total commitment to Christ. James 2:17-18, says, “So faith by itself, if it has no works is dead. But someone will say, You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.”

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know Einstein’s theory of relativity to serve. You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> James M. Washington, ed., *The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1986), 265-266.

I believe that it is only through teaching, preaching and training that we will be able to inform, educate and equip members in our churches to become leaders that will be able to carry out God's work. Ephesians 4:11-12 says, "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ." (NSRV)

Jesus wants to be everything in our lives. He doesn't want you to just be a church member. He wants to be Lord over our lives. "Becoming a Christian is free of charge. It costs the believer absolutely nothing. For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). But there is a cost attached to becoming a disciple. The cost is to become involved in God's 'thing' rather than our own. How easy it is for the Christian to become pre-occupied with his dreams, his aspirations, his own deal and miss God's perfect plan for his life." <sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples are Made not Born*, 37.



## CHAPTER 7 DISCIPLINES AND RESOURCES

In my local congregation, the church is charged with providing Christian Education. The congregation must see itself as a holistic ministry that will educate through many forms including: *kerygma* (proclaiming or preaching the Word of God), *didache* (teaching), *leiturgia* (worship and prayer), *koinonia* (community and communion) and *diakonia* (serving). There are at least three things that can create tension in Christian Education in our churches. These three things are a tension between the personal commitment and the communal commitment, the view of the church as a local organization instead of a global one and thirdly, the conflict and cooperation between clergy and laity. “Learning equips the church to remain the same while forever changing.”<sup>28</sup> Some churches or institutions have a Christian Education program that is only geared toward schooling. There is a difference between schooling and education. Schooling is what you learn according to an adopted school curriculum. Education takes place everywhere and all the time. Learning occurs all the time during our life span. This includes formal and informal education. We are not only learners, but teachers as well. Some educators are more concerned about trying to feed information into individuals as opposed to trying to bring out what gifts are in the individual that can be used for ministry to the larger body. They practice the banking concept of education.

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas R. Hawkins, *The Learning Congregation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 17.

Paulo Freire described this banking concept as deposits of information by the teacher into the student. This type of concept endorses memorization of information instead of an approach where critical thinking and problem solving is endorsed. The pursuit of truth through Christian Education involves society since individuals are a part of society and need to be self-critical in their search to determine what they believe or not.

Another challenge is curriculum. The curriculum must be flexible and adaptable to all age groups. The curriculum in the church must include more than schooling. It must include Christian Education and its application to ministry in order to build up the church members. Marla Harris in her book, *Fashion Me a People*, points out that all forms of curriculum planning should be utilized in religious education. This includes overcoming cultural silence on some issues, ending the banking theory of education and providing a non-neutral education. All of these attributes must be applied to the curriculum in order to celebrate the vocation that we as humans have been called to.

When we look at some of the challenges associated with Christian Education we might tend to feel overwhelmed, but there are possibilities. Thanks be to God that with God all things, even the impossible can become possible. The vision of establishing an effective Christian Education curriculum that meets the needs of Christian disciples and allows them to bring their spiritual gifts with them is achievable.

The possibilities are made more likely by having a shared vision and culture in the church environment that supports learning. Desirable learning environments should include the following: continuous learning opportunities, opportunity for dialogue and questioning, collaboration and team learning, a common vision and connection of the

church to its environment. “Leaders of learning congregations cultivate environments where individual, team and congregational levels of learning are mutually supportive.”<sup>29</sup>

One way to create this type of environment for religious education is to create a shared vision of possibilities. This vision must have buy-in from the teachers and learners. It can serve as a catalyst to help organize the learning activities that will make the vision come to fruition. There must be a recognizable link between the ultimate goal and the activities that will help you reach that goal. I believe this goal is reachable. This demonstration project takes on the challenge of providing a curriculum and environment where Christian disciples can learn what it means to be a disciple and through the use of some of the spiritual disciplines put into practice much of the knowledge they have obtained in order to bring about transformation in their lives, the church and their community.

In order to assess current Christian Education curriculum needs I performed an inventory of what currently exists in my local congregation.

At the Convent Avenue Baptist Church, our motto is “Changed People, Changing the Community and the World For Jesus Christ.” We believe that the church should serve in partnership with God through the Holy Spirit to bring humankind into reconciliation with God. We carry out this mission of reconciliation and ministry of bringing humankind into agreement with God through many activities, functions and services, all of which are designed to minister to the whole person: mind, body, soul and spirit. The mission of the church is carried out through three ministries: Proclamation, Education and Service Ministries.

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<sup>29</sup> Hawkins, *Learning Congregation*, 52.

The educational ministries at Convent are concerned with the nurture of every member in the congregation and are available to the community as well. We want people to know who they are and what their situation means in light of God's purpose for their life. The Educational Ministry is led by the Board of Christian Education. The Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education assists and monitors the work of the Board. The Board's work is to collectively carry out the church's Christian Education objectives. The Board is comprised of several agencies. It is through the Board and its agencies that opportunities for religious and secular education are made available.

The largest agency of the Board is the Sunday Church school program, which is a Bible centered program, which is a graded curriculum and open to anyone interested in learning more about Jesus. The Sunday Church school is comprised of the following departments: Nursery (infant-4yrs.), Kindergarten, Primary, Middlers, Juniors, Junior High, Senior High, Young Adults, Adults and Adult Males. Within these departments are on-going teacher training and development opportunities, along with special times of the year such as Thanksgiving and Easter. Sunday Church school is held every Sunday from 9:30 A.M.- 10:30 AM.

Bible Study is another Christian Education program that is available at the Convent Church. There are several opportunities for Bible Study; the Sunday afternoon Bible Study, the Pastor's Wednesday afternoon 1:30 P.M. Bible Study, the Wednesday Evening 6 P.M. Bible Study and the Children's Bible Study on Saturday morning.

Another opportunity for study is offered through the Member Development programs, which include a four-week orientation program to prepare new members for fellowship into the church. The new member orientation classes are held on Sunday at

9:30 A.M. and on Thursday evening at 7P.M. New member orientation for Children is held on Sundays at 9:30 A.M.

The Children's Ministry also provides educational opportunities through the Saturday Children's Fellowship which is designed to integrate African culture with Biblical truths. The second week of September is Christian Education Week. It is three nights dedicated to Christian education. Classes are conducted for Associate Ministers, Deacons and Trustees, Adults, Children and Youth (one night). Young Adult Bible study programs are available at various times during the year.

The Board of Christian Education also sponsors a nine-month Teacher Training Program, which includes a student internship. It also sponsors an annual Leadership Training Seminar. The Teacher Training program is held on Sundays at 9:30 A.M.

Since Christian education takes place wherever Christian learning takes place, I would also add preaching to this inventory. Preaching takes place at Convent on Wednesday noon at the Chapel at the Crossroads service, on Sundays at the 8 A.M. and 11 A.M. worship services and sometimes at the Sunday 5 P.M. service. Teaching also takes place at the monthly Church Council meetings and the semi-annual general church meetings.

The Mentoring ministry which is an agency under the Board of Christian Education sponsors a mentoring program for children ages 6-16 years old is also provided. Although, the church does not have a college program, it provides some scholarship assistance for its members to attend trade schools and colleges. The Afro-American Experience Forum ministry also sponsors the annual college fair. Children learn to use computers at the Saturday Children's Fellowship program.

The Christian and secular education programs are open to the children and adults of the congregation and those in the community with the exception of the new member orientation class and the scholarship assistance program. Based on this inventory of Christian and secular educative opportunities at the Convent Church, it can be said that there is a wide array of opportunities for learning for all age groups from infants to mature adults.

The Pastor and the Deacons and other leaders take Christian Education seriously at Convent. In fact, we cannot hold an elected office without being enrolled and participating in a Bible study or Sunday School class. The Pastor also teaches through his preaching. He also conducts the Wednesday afternoon Bible study class that is a favorite among the members of the congregation. The Pastor has a God-given teaching ability. He can reach all audiences. He never misses the opportunity to teach even at church council meetings or church meetings.

The Convent Church is an educational program in itself. The varied educational programs of the church give the members and non-members who participate in them the opportunity to better receive the Word of God and to help implement the church's mission which is line with the mission that Jesus the Christ has called us to fulfill.

Presently, new members are only required to attend four one-hour orientation classes before being accepted and fellowshiped as a member of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church. These classes are under the banner of Discovering Church Membership 101. The first lesson is about Our Salvation. This lesson includes information on what it means to be a Christian, the problem with sin, its solution and what God wants me to do. Lesson Two is about the Church Ordinances. As Baptists we believe that there are two

ordinances of the church that should be celebrated. The first ordinance is Baptism. Baptism for us means a full immersion into the water under the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We believe that Baptism is a way of following in Jesus' footsteps since He was baptized by John the Baptist. We also believe that Baptism is an outward expression of an inner conversion. The second Ordinance is the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion. The Lord's Supper is a reminder to believers of Jesus' death and resurrection on our behalf. It is a memorial to his suffering and resurrection for our sins. Jesus was without sin. Lesson Three is about What it Means to be a Member. The Convent Church Motto is, "We are Changed People, changing the community and the world for Jesus Christ." This lesson also focuses on what it takes to be a member of the church, God's family. It introduces worship, evangelism and ministry. It also outlines in a very simple manner what Convent Church believes—the Bible as its sole authority, autonomy of the local church, priesthood of every believer, tithing immersion, spirit led-giving and telling others about Christ. Lesson Four is about Growing in Christ which includes tithing, fellowship, prayer and how to study God's Word. All of this information on the four lessons is contained in a seventy-three page booklet that is provided to the students as a guide for their study and a reference for future use. In the back of this booklet is a listing of the more than sixty ministries at Convent. New members are encouraged to join a Sunday School class and then participate in a ministry group. I believe that corporate study of the Word of God and involvement in a ministry helps members to grow spiritually and remain connected. Convent is a large church and you can get lost in the mix if you are not connected to a group. Being connected gives you the opportunity to engage with others, know other members and feel a sense of

family. I can see the actualization of this from the time that I taught in the Extended Orientation Classes (Foundations for Christian Living) classes several years ago. I still know members who were new at the time and completed their four new member classes and then completed the Extended Orientation classes. They are still at Convent and involved in a Sunday School class and in a ministry. Some of them are singing solos in one of the many choirs we have. Others are ushers (keeping the door), while others are actively participating in other service, outreach or educational ministries of the church. Presently, there is no extended orientation or continuing member development course available at Convent other than the Sunday Church School which follows a uniform curriculum.

Some new members are reluctant to get actively involved in the ministry of the church because they lack the necessary foundational knowledge regarding Christian doctrine and beliefs. This Discipleship course will help them overcome that obstacle to serving in Christian ministry. This Discipleship Course will also provide an opportunity for new members and current members to build a foundation of knowledge and gain practical insights regarding what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in a local congregation.

As part of this Demonstration Project, I conducted a new Discipleship Course for Convent. My initial approach was to review the initial information that was previously used for the Extended Orientation classes and tailor it for use in a Discipleship Course. I also reviewed other curricula and Bible studies for making disciples. The information reviewed is as follows:



## **Celebrating the Spiritual Disciplines by Richard Foster**

Dr. Richard Foster is a Christian theologian and author in the Quaker tradition. His writings speak to a broad Christian audience. He has been a professor at Friends University and pastor of Evangelical Friends churches. He earned his undergraduate degree at George Fox University in Oregon and His Doctor of Pastoral Theology at Fuller Seminary and received an honorary doctorate from Houghton College.<sup>30</sup>

Dr. Foster categorizes the Spiritual Disciplines into Inward Disciplines, Outward Disciplines and Corporate Disciplines. He calls these disciplines the door to liberation.

1. The Inward Disciplines are: Meditation, Prayer, Fasting and Study.
2. The Outward Disciplines are: Simplicity, Solitude, Submission and Service.
3. The Corporate Disciplines are: Confession, Worship and Guidance.

After the study of each set of disciplines there is a time of celebration. There is also a companion workbook with the Celebration of Spiritual Disciplines text.

I believe that the study and practice of the Spiritual Disciplines is needed for new disciples and mature disciples. We must learn discipline in order to be a disciple and we must practice discipline as well. Dr. Foster's book had been endorsed by Dr. Dallas Willard, professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California and an ordained Southern Baptist minister. Professor Willard wrote: "*Celebration of Discipline* has quietly asserted itself in the lives of multitudes around the globe, and has taken its place as a guide to the uplands of the spiritual life for the late twentieth century."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Mark Galli, "A Life Formed in Spirit," *Christianity Today*, September 2008  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/september/26.41.html> (accessed January 27, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 209-210.

After reviewing *Celebration of Disciplines*, I determined that it was very broad and might be too advanced for a foundational discipleship course. I like the idea of studying and practicing the spiritual disciplines, but I needed to find a more basic approach. Still in pursuit of a discipleship study program rooted in the spiritual disciplines, I reviewed the book, *Disciplines of the Spirit* by Dr. Howard Thurman.

### **Disciplines of the Spirit by Dr. Howard Thurman**

Dr. Howard Thurman was Dean Emeritus of Marsh Chapel, Boston University and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Howard Thurman Educational Trust in San Francisco. He also served as Dean of Rankin Chapel, Howard University and Professor at Howard School of Religion and Director of Religious Life at Morehouse and Spelman Colleges in Atlanta, Ga.

In *Disciplines of the Spirit*, Dr. Thurman examines five dimensions of spiritual life: commitment, growing in wisdom and stature, suffering, prayer and reconciliation. This breakdown of disciplines follows his teaching method at the Graduate School of Theology at Boston University. His material is presented in a philosophical manner. It is very profound and thought provoking, but does not lend itself to ease of use for a basic discipleship course. I believe that Dr. Thurman's work, *Disciplines of the Spirit* would provide for a great study in an advanced Discipleship course in my local congregation.

The next material that I reviewed was by Dr. Bill Hull. Dr. Bill Hull is a Pastor and writer who has focused on being a disciple and making disciples. He is the author of *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*. In this book he discusses the Biblical foundations of discipleship and explains how discipleship is God's primary work and how He gave this mission to us. He also talks about how a transformed person can change the world. He also points out that discipleship is not a

program. From my experiences, I agree with him on this whole-heartedly. Discipleship must be an on-going pursuit. He also points out that discipleship is not a production line. It is a part of life and the environment that life occurs in. It is not just for beginners, nor is it just for church leaders. Mature disciples can benefit from being refreshed in the principles of discipleship. All Christians have a responsibility to grow and become all they can become in Christ.

### **Experience the Life by Bill Hull and Paul Mascarella**

Experience the Life is a thirty week Bible study series. This series is composed of five books, each one six weeks in length.

Book One: *Believe as Jesus Believed – Transformed Mind*

Book Two: *Live as Jesus Lived- Transformed Character*

Book Three: *Love as Jesus Loved – Transformed Relationships*

Book Four: *Minister as Jesus Ministered – Transformed Service*

Book Five: *Lead as Jesus Led – Transformed Influence*

This series uses the reading of Scripture, reflection on Scripture, the praying of Scripture and the living of the Word of God to others to bring about transformation in the disciple and the disciple's life. This is a great series but is more focused on the spiritual discipline of prayer.

The next curriculum that I reviewed was *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* by Francis Chan with Mark Beuving. Francis Chan is a Pastor and church planter based in San Francisco. He is on the Board of World Impact and Children's Hunger Fund. He is also the author of *Crazy Love*, which has sold more than two million copies. Mark Beuving is an associate professor of interdisciplinary studies at Eternity Bible College. He lives in Southern California. His passion is exploring the many ways that God's Word speaks to and transforms every area of life.

## ***Multiply* by Francis Chan and Mark Beuving**

The *Multiply* study gives two basic guidelines for the leader (1) teach what you learn and (2) share life, not just information. *Multiply* is a weekly Bible Study that is reinforced by a video and a study guide. The weekly sessions can be downloaded for free. The topics covered are as follows:

### **Part I: Living as a Disciple Maker**

1. What Is a Disciple?
2. The Command to Make Disciples
3. The Heart of a Disciple Maker

### **Part II: Living as the Church**

1. Life in the Church
2. The Local Church
3. The Global Church

### **Part III: How to Study the Bible**

1. Why Study the Bible?
2. Studying the Bible Prayerfully and Obediently
3. Studying Logically

### **Part IV: Understanding the Old Testament**

1. The Creation
2. The Fall
3. God's Covenant with Abraham
4. Exodus and Redemption
5. God's Covenant with Moses
6. Sacrifice and Atonement
7. God's Presence on Earth
8. The Kingdom of God
9. Exile and the Promise of Restoration

## Part V: Understanding the New Testament

1. Jesus the Messiah
2. The Great Commission
3. The Spirit of God
4. The Early Church
5. Good News for All Nations
6. The End of the Story

### **Where Do We Go from Here?**

This curriculum would serve very well as a separate course for new members after they have had a basic discipleship course that is more geared to the recognition and practice of the spiritual disciplines. For example, this course is very dependent on the student studying and interpreting the Scripture associated with each topic. I believe that a student especially a new member to the church needs to be introduced to the spiritual discipline of Bible study and prayer before participating in the *Multiply* course.

Before choosing a curriculum for the new Discipleship Course, that I would utilize as part of my Demonstration Project, I met with my Senior Pastor, he encouraged me to use the *MasterLife* Curriculum by Dr. Avery T. Willis, Jr. Dr. Willis is a former pastor, missionary and former vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board, where he oversaw the work of 5,600 missionaries in more than 130 countries. *MasterLife* is covered in a twenty-four week program schedule. The participants go through four modules in six-week segments. Each of these segments is detailed below:

### **The Disciple's Cross**

*The Disciple's Cross* presents the six spiritual disciplines which form the foundation of the *MasterLife* Curriculum: *Spend Time With The Master, Live In The*

*Word, Pray In Faith, Fellowship With Believers, Witness To The World, Minister To Others.*<sup>32</sup>

The first spiritual discipline, “Spending time with the Master relates to having a daily quality time with Christ. Each week has five days of material. Week One has the following topics:

- Day 1: The First Priority- putting Christ
- Day 2: Under Christ’s Control
- Day 3: Connected to the Vine
- Day 4: Learning Obedience
- Day 5: Challenges to Obedience

The second spiritual discipline, Living in the Word contains the following material.

- Day 1: A Close Relationship with Jesus
- Day 2: Guidance for Daily Decisions
- Day 3: Petitioning for Needs
- Day 4: Abiding and Obeying
- Day 5: A Daily Discipline

The daily material for the fourth spiritual discipline, Praying in Faith is as follows:

- Day 1: Praying for What God Wants- asking according to God’s Will
- Day 2: Enter His Gates with Thanksgiving
- Day 3: Enter His Courts with Praise
- Day 4: The Altar of Confession
- Day 5: In God’s Presence

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<sup>32</sup> Avery T. Willis, Jr., *MasterLife, Book One: The Disciple’s Cross* (Nashville TN: Lifeway, 2004), 10-114.

Fellowship with Believers describes the discipline of developing and growing with others who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The five days of material include:

- Day 1: The Mark of a Disciple
- Day 2: The Gift of Accountability
- Day 3: Help for Withered Christians
- Day 4: What Christ Expects from us
- Day 5: The Model of Friendship

Week 5 is about Witnessing to the World, it centers on the topic of evangelism, telling others about Jesus Christ and is presented as follows:

- Day 1: Bearing Fruit for Christ
- Day 2: Relying on Christ
- Day 3: Every Disciple's Orders
- Day 4: Compelled to Tell
- Day 5: The Price of Bearing Fruit

Week 6 is about Ministering to Others. The topics presented are as follows:

- Day 1: Take Up Your Cross
- Day 2: Ministry in Christ's Name
- Day 3: More Ways to Minister
- Day 4: The Demands of Christ
- Day 5: A Disciple Indeed

The second component from the *Masterlife* curriculum is found in Book No. 2, *The Disciple's Personality*. This component instructs the participants on how to develop Christian character that is pleasing to God, and the burden that was lifted.

The third component from the *Masterlife* curriculum is found in Book No. 3, *The Disciple's Victory*. *The Disciple's Victory* is about the spiritual warfare that we wage with the devil, God's enemy, on a daily basis.

The fourth component from the *Masterlife* curriculum is found in Book No. 4, *The Disciple's Mission*. *The Disciple's Mission* is about how to witness to others at home, church and the world.

The *Masterlife* curriculum developed by Dr. Avery Willis is very detailed and requires a substantial amount of time to complete. The information contained in it is essential to training disciples and retaining them in the church and getting them involved in ministry; however, it requires a substantial commitment on the part of the disciple in training and the trainer. Time is a commodity that is in short supply in a congregation with over three thousand members. The church calendar is filled with all kinds of activity for every Sunday. Therefore, a modified version of the *Masterlife* curriculum was used by using the book, *MasterLife, Developing a Rich Personal Relationship with the Master*.<sup>33</sup> It is authored by Dr. Avery T. Willis, Jr., and his daughter, Ms. Sherrie Willis Brown and based on the best-selling discipleship program created by Dr. Willis.

In the post-modern world it is very difficult to get people to commit their time and energy to a course or project for six months. It is no different in the church. This difficulty can stem from personal issues or crises or social issues. In other words life happens to all of us which causes us to change or dismiss commitments we have made, even with the best of intentions to fulfill. This was evidenced by the first Discipleship course which is a ten week course of study under this project being offered to twenty

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<sup>33</sup> Avery T. Willis, Jr. and Sherrie Willis Brown, *MasterLife, Developing a Rich Personal Relationship with the Master* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998).



eight students and only being completed by twenty four. Two students withdrew after the first class because of job issues and other issues, respectively. Two students asked to be included in the next class because of previous commitments during the time the class would be held.

The other reason for using the shortened version of the *MasterLife* curriculum is because the students' knowledge is not homogenous. The students are at various stages of their Christian walk so concepts sometimes have to be explained in detail with the allowable time that is available.

## **CHAPTER 8 MINISTERIAL COMPENCIES**

### **Competencies Chosen for Development**

**Competency I: As a Preacher/Interpreter of Sacred Texts – To prepare sermons that address contemporary concerns and offer biblical solutions to them.**

**Strategies:**

- A. Prepare two sermons that address contemporary concerns, with Biblical Solutions to those concerns.

I prepared two sermons that address contemporary concerns with Biblical solutions to those concerns. These sermons are included in Appendix

- B. Record the two sermons and distribute them to my Site Team and at least two members of the congregation for their critique.

Sermons preached at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church are recorded via DVD or Compact Disc (CD). I obtained CDs of the two sermons, and distributed them to the members of my site team along with a Sermon Critique form (Appendix) for their listening and critique.

- C. Preach one of the sermons if given the opportunity to do so before completion of this demonstration project.

I had the opportunity to preach the sermon entitled

**Evaluation:**

- A. I will solicit a written assessment of the sermons from the Site Team and the other people who receive the recorded version of the sermon. These written assessments should show that the sermon addresses contemporary concerns and provides Biblical solutions to those concerns.

The written assessments from the Site Team are as follows:

**Competency II: As an Ecumenist – To learn how another faith tradition addresses discipleship and training of its new members.**

**Strategies:**

- A. Interview at least one leader of a faith tradition other than Baptist and ascertain how they address discipleship and training in their congregation.
- B. Compare the information obtained to how we address discipleship and training in our congregation.

**Evaluation:**

- A. The attainment of discipleship and training information from at least one other non-Baptist faith tradition.

**Preacher/interpreter of sacred texts ecumenist**

I distributed to my Site Team Members with the exception of one who was unavailable at the time, copies on compact discs of two of my previous sermons that are included in the Appendix of this Demonstration Project along with a sermon critique form that is also included as an Appendix to this document. A copy of the compact discs with the sermons and copies of the critique for were also given to two members of my local congregation for their critique. The first sermon was entitled, “Overcoming a Drought.” The Sermon text was 1 Kings 18:1, 41-46. The second sermon was entitled,

“Stay in the Race, It Ain’t Over Yet.” The sermon text was 1st Corinthians 9:19-27. The sermon text is from the King James Version of the Bible, which is my church’s tradition.

As a preacher/interpreter of the Sacred Word of God, it is truly a blessing to be able to solicit feedback from those who had heard me preach when I first started preaching and are hearing me now. The feedback I received on the two sermons that were critiqued was surprising in some instances, but it is greatly appreciated, because it gives me an opportunity to improve on how my sermon is structured, delivered and received.

As part of the analysis of my competencies, I provided site team members with a Sermon Critique Sheets on which to analyze my two sermons. The following are the consolidated results.

**Following Summary of Ratings for two sermons**  
**1= Poor, 2=Weak; 3=Fair=; 4=Good; 5=Excellent**  
**Number of forms returned: 6**

**Sermon Title: “Overcoming A Drought”**

Did it introduce the theme?	4.5
Is it relevant?	4.6
Is it Scripturally based?	4.9
Did sermon stay with the text and the theme?	4.0
Was the theme fully developed?	4.1
Was there a good analysis of the text?	4.1
Illustrations: If any, were they helpful?	4.2
Did the sermon address Contemporary issues?	4.5
Did it offer Biblical solutions?	4.3
Overall Sermon Content	4.3

**Comments**

- “Great Sermon for me though, I was hoping for more Illustrations directly from the Bible. I was hoping to hear more stories directly related to Scripture. Stayed on the subject of Ahab and Elijah. You brought it to life and then you jumped too quickly to modern times. It seemed as if you wanted to stay in the text but time constraints made you shorten your sermon.

- “Sermon was extremely comprehensive in terms of theme, but I feel more of the text in Chapter 18 should have been presented during the reading of the text, as concepts in the Chapter not read were addressed in your sermon.”
- “This sermon felt a little convoluted, it jumped from one Biblical person to the next and wasn’t connected to the sermon listeners as the other sermon was.
- “I think it was very good.”
- “Sermon was theologically sound and offered encouragement for contemporary issues.
- “I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation. Your contemporary thoughts were insightful realistic. Looking forward to hearing more of your presentations.

**Sermon Title: “Stay in the Race, It Ain’t Over Yet”**

Did it introduce the theme?	4.8
Is it relevant?	4.6
Is it Scripturally based?	4.8
Did sermon stay with the text and the theme?	4.6
Was the theme fully developed?	4.5
Was there a good analysis of the text?	4.5
Illustrations: If any, were they helpful?	4.8
Did the sermon address Contemporary issues?	4.8
Did it offer Biblical solutions?	50
Overall Sermon Content	4.6

**Comments:**

- “Sermon on text edifying, she preached with confidence. Consider training your voice for greater reflection for emotional involvement with hearer.”
- “Excellent Sermon! Timely & extremely encouraging!”
- “Good use of contrast vs. comparing our race with the race of biblical figures such as apostles. (Paul in particular). Good encouragement to keep trying and keep striving.”
- “I actually felt there were 2 themes. (1) Winning a spiritual race (2) God is always in charge. Both were tied together very well. The message was very uplifting and very inspiring. Great theme and message leading into the New Year. It tells us the race is not over and God is still there for you.”
- “The overall sermon content was ‘Excellent’.”

**Competency II: As an Ecumenist – To learn how another faith tradition addresses discipleship and training of its new members.**

I interviewed Deacon John Kelly, a Deacon in the Catholic Church who is a member of a parish in Rockland County, New York. Deacon Kelly was ordained by Cardinal O'Connor. I asked Deacon Kelly to describe the process for Christian Education of Adults in the Catholic Church and his parish.

Deacon Kelly described the Rites of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). He also provided me a pamphlet that describes the process in more depth. "In the Catholic Church "the word 'catechumenate' designates the community of people preparing to become members of the Christian community. The term is derived from the Greek word for instruction." <sup>34</sup> Adults can join the Catholic Church either by baptism or by restoring their membership. Candidates seeking admission to the Catholic Church are accompanied by Sponsors who know the candidate and can vouch for their moral character, faith and intention. A sponsor is not needed in my local congregation. However, we do assign a person a Spiritual Big Brother or Big Sister to the new member under instruction. Those who are preparing to join the church are instructed in the following topics:

The role of Scripture plays in the daily life of the community,

How Liturgy serves as the source and summit of the Church's life,

The witness given in social action,

The relationship of prayer one has with God and the community,

How doctrinal statements have taken shape. <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Julia Upton, *Understanding the RCIA, The Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Deacon Kelly indicated that a weekly meeting about two hours in length is held with the Catechist (Instructor) who can be a Deacon or a Priest. These sessions usually start in September and continue to Easter week. Before Lent and Easter, the person under instruction, the catechumenate has to make a commitment that they will follow the teachings of the Catholic Church and continue their instruction. Deacon Kelly indicated that he had eight people in his Catechumenate of which two were teenagers. The two teenagers have dropped out for some reason. On Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday, there is a mass of welcoming for the candidates. The Candidates then state they will follow the rules of the Catholic Church. Those catechumens who have never been baptized might receive their first Communion. After this process, there is on-going training for another year. These members are invited to participate in Bible Study groups.

As I reflected on this process for new members in the Catholic Church and the instruction for new member in my local congregation, I see that there is a similarity when it comes to instruction of the candidates for membership. In my local congregation, the Convent Avenue Baptist Church we have four weekly classes that include the study of Salvation, Church Ordinances (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), What it means to be a Member and Growing in Christ. In the Catholic Church, there is weekly instruction for the candidates, but it extends from early September to Easter week. As far as the course material, at Convent we use a curriculum established by the Convent Church. In the Catholic Church the curriculum is from the church-wide and nation-wide, book entitled, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences and the Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops. This

material is very detailed and very process oriented. It recognizes that following Christ is a process. My local congregation also recognizes that being a follower of Christ is a process, also it is not just the completion of one class in Discipleship, but the first part of any journey starts with the first step. Discipleship involves being a lifelong learner and one who is always looking to make disciples for Jesus.

### **MINISTERIAL COMPETENCY REPORT BY SITE TEAM**

The Site Team members held several meetings with the Candidate where the competency assessments were discussed. The Site Team members were very thorough and honest in their assessments. All of the assessments were summarized and provided to all members. The group agreed on an overall summary statement of the assessments presented.

A summary of the Site Team's assessments as well as mine are shown below.

#### **The Assessments**

*As Theologian* – Rev. Faison's sermons and prayers demonstrate theological knowledge. She has a way of relating Biblical texts to the modern world. Rev. Faison has demonstrated Biblical training and has a well-rounded background to affect the world positively when presenting issues. She has shown her desire to grow theologically by her pursuit of a Doctor of Ministry Degree at New York Theological Seminary. The *Candidate believes she should continue to develop in the area of other disciplines such as psychology.*

*As a Preacher/Interpreter of Sacred Texts* – Rev. Faison exegetes her pericope and relates her sermon to the topic effectively. It is evident through her congregational prayers and the Preached Word that she and her messages are spirit filled, biblically-based and reach to the uttermost depths of our contemporary concerns where the listeners



are empowered to move forward in their Christian walk and growth. Rev. Faison's sermon delivery style is most effective because she has the ability to teach while preaching. *The Candidate wants to address contemporary concerns in a more direct manner in her sermons.*

*As Worship Leader* - Rev. Faison adheres to the order of service, fulfilling various leadership roles in an effective manner. She has demonstrated her ability to plan, lead and carry-out worship services by presiding, dedicating babies and preaching at the same time. She is very helpful with moving worshippers through the worship experience. *The Candidate would like the opportunity to broaden her skills in this area by performing a wedding ceremony or presiding at a funeral.*

*As Prophetic Agent* - Rev. Faison is committed to the development of her local community and is well aware of its needs which are many. She is also aware of global issues, but focuses more on the local community. Rev. Faison would be more effective if she related her sermons to issues and problems present in the world and offered biblically- based solutions to help cure them. *The Candidate wants to include global issues in her preaching in an effective way.*

*As Leader* - Rev. Faison has served in many leadership roles in the Convent Avenue Baptist Church, including Deacon, Deaconess, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Teacher, Church Anniversary Journal Chairperson and Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education. In these roles she has motivated others to become leaders. She is always positive in providing encouragement and has the capacity to become a greater leader by further developing her skills to motivate others to grow their spiritual gifts. *The Candidate wants to grow in the leadership role.*

*As a Religious Educator* – From Rev. Faison’s sermons and her biblical teaching it can be ascertained that she has a very keen understanding of the learning process across human life. She conveys the Bible in a way that enables laypersons as well as biblical scholars to learn. Rev. Faison is concise and clear in the way she speaks as well as the way she teaches. She has offered religious guidance in many ways, including her role as Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education. *The Candidate would like to make more use of audio/visual aids in teaching.*

*As Counselor* - Rev. Faison dedicates children and guides their parents and godparents with “rich” counsel to strengthen them and direct them about the need to walk close to the Lord in the interest of the child and themselves. She is approachable and is willing to take time to speak with or counsel others. *The Candidate wants to strengthen her counseling skills.*

*As Pastor* - Rev. Faison is an Associate Minister at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church. She preaches, teaches, carries out the Ordinance of Baptism and helps serve Communion, when called upon. At the Greater Universal Baptist Church she has presided over Communion. Rev. Faison previously served as the monthly preacher at the Greater Harlem Nursing Home. Her primary role at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church is that of Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education. *The Candidate would like to enhance her gift of hospitality.*

*As Spiritual Leader* – Rev. Faison is familiar with the practice of her own religious community. She has served in many roles as a spiritual leader including worship leader and Bible Study teacher. In addition, Rev. Faison has served effectively in leading Deacons’ Retreats, and Board of Christian Education programs. *The*

*Candidate wants to learn more about the spiritual traditions and practices of other faith traditions.*

*As an Ecumenist* - Rev. Faison is aware of her faith tradition and the need of individuals within that faith tradition and the Convent Avenue Baptist Church. Although, she is aware of other religious traditions and global issues, her focus is more localized. With the changing face of our community due to immigration and gentrification, it would be helpful if she sharpened her knowledge of other faiths and religious institutions. *The Candidate sees the need to learn more about other faith traditions and to attend other faith tradition services as available.*

*As a Witness or Evangelist* - Rev. Faison is a witness for Jesus Christ and works with the other members of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church to spread the Word of His works. She witnesses through her delivery of the Word and her Christian walk. Rev. Faison has invited many to the Church who were of different faiths. Rev. Faison could further develop in this area by including social issues and possible solutions in her proclamations. *The Candidate wants to become more involved in witnessing in a deliberate manner to those outside the walls of the church.*

*As an Administrator* – Rev. Faison has served in high-level positions at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church including Chair of the Board of Trustees, member of the Deacon's Ministry and Chair of the Board of Christian Education. During her tenure as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, she strengthened the church's financial position. *The Candidate would like to improve her organizational skills.*

*As a Professional* - Rev. Faison is able to effectively communicate using the written word or verbally. She performs tasks when asked to do so. Rev. Faison is

personable and respectful in her relationship with others. She is the consummate professional. Rev. Faison is a great listener and wonderful communicator on a corporate and personal level. The *Candidate needs to be more intentional about limiting her workload.*

The process of assessment by others gives us an opportunity to see how we are perceived by others. I found this process useful to me and my ministry. I would like to thank my Site Team for their openness and honesty in their assessment of me and my ministerial competencies and capabilities.

## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A**  
**DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL**

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING AS A TOOL FOR CONGREGATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

BY

CHARLENE D. FAISON

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary

February 1, 2011

**Challenge Statement**

As an Associate Minister at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church located on West 145<sup>th</sup> Street in the heart of Harlem, USA, I have observed that contrary to a national trend of church membership loss, Convent Church experienced a new member growth of 123 in 2009; however, these new faces are not being integrated into the existing church ministries. If this issue is not addressed, new members will leave the Convent Church because they haven't had an opportunity to develop their spiritual gifts and utilize them in ministry. As a result, the Church will fail to retain viable members. This demonstration project will create a strategy to engage new members to become active and productive members in the congregation.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING**

“Upon the hill-top’s graceful heights, grey stones against sky blue there stands a church, whose beacon light, shines out o’er Harlem’s view - a church whose walls so brightly glow with faith’s undying flame - where people come to worship God, and praise his Holy Name. O Convent, Our Convent. Thank God for all the things you meant. We hear God’s Word and learn to serve God and his creation.”<sup>36</sup> The church referred to in the lyrics of this song is the Convent Avenue Baptist Church, (Convent Church) which is located at the corner of 145th Street and Convent Avenue in the Village of Harlem, USA. The Convent Avenue Baptist church has been in existence for over sixty-eight years and is well known inside and outside of the Village of Harlem, USA.

According to the History of the Convent Church found in its Fiftieth Anniversary Journal, the Convent Avenue Baptist Church was founded on February 4, 1942, by the late Dr. John W, Saunders and a small group of congregants known as the Kingdom Builders. The Convent Church was later incorporated in 1952. The Spirit of the Lord led the seventy three-old Dr. Saunders to establish the Convent Avenue Baptist Church at that time. Many pastors in their senior years would have probably been ready to retire, but not Dr. Saunders who demonstrated great faith in God. Dr. Saunders believed like the prophet Nehemiah that the people could accomplish more beyond measure if they had a mind to work.

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<sup>36</sup> Dr. Gregory Hopkins, “Convent Anniversary Hymn,” 1992.



Dr. Saunders had been the Pastor of Walker Memorial Baptist Church (Walker Memorial) since 1928. In 1939, Dr. Saunders along with some other members of that church allegedly without authorization from the Board of Trustees began negotiations for the sale of the Walker Memorial Church building in order to purchase another church building. The group collected thirteen hundred dollars from various groups in the Church; allegedly, the money was never turned over to a Trustee. This situation led to the Walker Memorial congregation dismissing Dr. Saunders as Pastor. Dr. Saunders filed a lawsuit against Walker Memorial that dealt with the correct legal process for removing a Pastor of that Church. The law was not crystal clear in this case. This court case is now part of New York Religious Corporation Law. This case made a lasting impression therefore, the Convent Church does not allow its ministry groups to conduct fund raising activities except for the Children and Youth ministries.

After Dr. Saunders was dismissed from Walker Memorial, he and a small group of congregants called the “Kingdom Builders” started to worship at a place on 132nd Street and 7th Avenue in New York City which served as a dance hall from Monday to Saturday, and then a church on Sunday mornings. Dr. Saunders later learned that the Washington Heights Baptist Church which was located at 420 West 145th Street and Convent Avenue was willing to sell their church building to the Kingdom Builders. However the mortgage was more than the Kingdom Builders thought that they could handle. With the help of God and several good friends such as Dr. Charles H. Sears, Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., Dr. O’Clay Maxwell, Sr., Messrs. George H. Simms, Horatio S. Hill and others. The sale price was reduced to \$50,000 and the property was purchased and the Convent Church was established.

Although the congregation was small, they had a mind to work and that's what they did. They paid off the entire amount of the mortgage in approximately three years and three months. On May 27, 1945, they burned the mortgage.

The Church continued to grow and expand. The people of Convent had a mind to work. In a short time other properties such as 354 and 356 Convent Avenue were purchased by the Church. Dr. Saunders strongly believed that the church should reach out to the community. This was evident by the establishing of a Day Nursery to assist young parents plus the creation of youth groups such as Girl and Boy Scouts, release time classes, vacation Bible School and a Junior Church. On September 18, 1955, Dr. Saunders suffered a stroke which brought his active ministry to an end. He continued to be a strong advocate for the Lord until he passed away on February 19, 1961, in New York Hospital at the age of 92 years old.

As the second pastor of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church and assumed the pastorate on May 31, 1961. Reverend Mannie Lee Wilson, was affectionately called M.L. Rev. Wilson had previously served as Minister of the Junior Church. Rev. Wilson had also served as supply Pastor for five years when Dr. Saunders took ill in 1955. Under the leadership of Rev. Wilson, the Convent Church grew from 199 to 1500. He initiated several programs which continue to this day. Rev. Wilson was known for his soul stirring sermon. As pastor for twenty years, he wielded great influence in the Harlem community, New York State, the White House and around the world. The Convent

Church started to take on the reputation of being a "Preacher's Church." During Rev. Wilson's pastoral ministry the membership of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church grew to 3,000 persons. The people of Convent continued to work. The church purchased

some additional properties which continue to be used for the programs of the church and the community. Rev. Wilson's health started to fail in 1979. Rev. Clarence P. Grant, who had served under Rev. Wilson since 1979, was installed as the third pastor of Convent Church after the death of Rev. Wilson in 1982. Rev. Grant served as pastor of the Convent Church until 2005. During that period of time, he started many programs at the church such as Wednesday Mid-day Chapel at the Crossroads Service, the Prison Ministry, the Homeless Ministry, the Food Pantry, the Saturday Children's Fellowship, the Stephen Ministry, the Ministry of Remembrance, the Betty B. Wilson Learning Center and many others. Pastor Grant's trademark saying was "carry on." He was a humble and quiet man who preached with power and had a real concern for the less fortunate.

Over the years Convent Church has faced many challenges. One of its most significant challenges came in 1999 when Pastor Grant decided that it was time to change to the Church's Constitution and By-laws in part to allow the ordination of women as Deacons. The call and ordination of women as deacons or clergy has been and continues to be an issue that divides denominations and some congregations. There are several arguments for not allowing females to become part of the ordained ministry of Christ. Some of these arguments include the notion that the original Apostles were male and there is no biblical precedent for a woman to serve in these roles. Some conservative denominations also advocate that since family decision-making power is concentrated in the husband, the same should apply in the church. Conservatives generally interpret 1st Corinthians Chapter 14 as restricting all women's speech in the church. If women are not allowed to speak, then according to this view, they obviously cannot be pastors or priests.

I see this as keeping people in bondage. We must look to Jesus and his dealings with males and females as a new paradigm. The paradigm of a household with males and females with equal authority and power must be created. This can only be accomplished through the recognition that the transforming power of Jesus through his Holy Spirit is acting in all of us. The Bible states in Galatians 3:28 that, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (NRSV)

Pressures within our society have been placed on religious organizations imploring them to ban discrimination based on gender. Many organizations have evolved from restricting women, to ordaining them to the ministry. They now choose clergy based on the individual’s personality, intelligence, and knowledge regardless of gender. The Scriptures have examples of women as prophets and disciples. These include Miriam, the sister of Moses, Deborah, the prophet-judge, Huldah, a prophet, Dorcas, a female disciple, Euodia, Syntyche and Priscilla, co-workers of the Apostle Paul and Phoebe a deacon of the church at Cenchrea.

The author of *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church*, Letty M. Russell agrees that women should be represented in the ministry. Dr. Russell is somewhat critical of the church because in her opinion the church does not do all that it can to reaffirm women and provide justice for all. She describes the church as a community of Christ, bought with a price where everyone is welcome. In other words, everything about Christ and his ministry has not been revealed to us yet. I would go beyond that and say that Jesus was and is an equal opportunity employer regardless of our gender. On the third Sunday of May in 2000, eighteen female Deaconesses were

ordained as Deacons of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church. Rev. Grant passed away on May 16, 2005.

The Convent Church formed a Pulpit Search Committee. In 2007, that Committee recommended for consideration as Pastor, Reverend Dr. Jesse T. Williams, Jr. By vote of the Church body, he was selected to serve as the new Pastor. The Convent Church installed Dr. Williams as its fourth pastor on September 13, 2007. Pastor Williams brings to the Convent Church that great ability to boldly proclaim the Word of God in a way that is spirit filled and inviting. That is evidenced by the fact that in 2009 one hundred and twenty three persons joined the Convent Church and in 2010, ninety people joined. The mission of the Convent Church is, “to proclaim the Gospel and bring souls to Christ.” <sup>37</sup> Pastor Williams has developed a motto for the congregation which portrays the mission of the church. The motto is “Changed People, Changing the Community and the World for Jesus Christ.” <sup>38</sup>

The Convent Church has a unique identity in that it is known for its strong preaching, exceptional music that covers a wide genre, and its many outreach programs. The Church has over sixty organized ministries. Along this line, the Church is organized so that it has a three-faceted approach to ministry inside and outside of the walls of the church. The first facet is the Proclamation ministries. These ministries include the Pastor, the Official Boards, the Administration staff, the choirs, the ushers, and the nurses’ unit. The second facet is the educational ministry. The Christian Education Ministry is concerned with the spiritual development of individuals for the work of God’s

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<sup>37</sup> Convent Avenue Baptist Church, *2008 Annual Report*, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

ministry here on earth. It is through Christian education that we come closer to God by reading and studying His Word and thereby establish a personal relationship with God. The Educational Ministry includes the Sunday Church School, the Training and Development ministry which includes The New Teacher's Training program, the Basic Member Development ministry which includes, New Member Orientation and Big Brothers and Big Sisters nurturing ministry, the Children's ministry, the Youth Ministry, the Young Adult Ministry, the Adult Ministry and the Single Adult Ministry. The Service Ministries are the third facet. The Service ministries are concerned with outreach and are organized under the Board of Christian Missions. The ministries that fall under the auspices of the Board of Christian Mission include the Sick and Shut-In ministry, the AIDS Ministry, the Comfort Ministry, the Prayer Ministry, the Health Committee, the Stephen Ministry, the Nursing Home Ministry, the Men's Ministry, the Women's Ministry, the Food Pantry, the Homeless Ministry, the Prison Ministry, the Evangelism Ministry, the Stewardship Ministry, the Audio-visual Ministry, the Yes, We Care Ministry, the Employment Ministry and the Social Action Ministry. The people of Convent Church are continuing to work.

One of the challenges currently facing the Convent Avenue Baptist Church is the issue of gentrification in the community where the Church is located. This needs to be examined and incorporated into the Church's internal and outreach programs. This issue needs to be examined in regard to membership development and integration of non-majority race members into the ministries of the Church.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS**

#### **Challenge Statement**

As an Associate Minister at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church located on West 145th Street in the heart of Harlem, USA, I have observed that contrary to a national trend of church membership loss, Convent Church experienced a new member growth of 123 in 2009; however, these new faces are not being integrated into the existing church ministries. If this issue is not addressed, new members will leave the Convent Church because they haven't had an opportunity to develop their spiritual gifts and utilize them in ministry. As a result, the Church will fail to retain viable members. This demonstration project will create a strategy to engage new members to become active and productive members and develop leaders in the congregation.

Since 1952, the Convent Avenue Church has operated with lay leaders playing an important role in carrying out the ministry of the Church. These leaders have been people who have either been selected or have volunteered to lead different ministries in the Church. These lay leaders include the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Sunday Church School Superintendent, Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education, Chairperson of the Board of Christian Mission, President of the Women's Ministry, President of the Men's Ministry, Presidents of the different choirs and usher boards and other ministry leaders. The people who have served in these capacities over the years have all been unpaid volunteers.

The current congregation of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church has almost 3,000 members. It has over sixty organized ministries that carry out the work of the church on

a volunteer basis. The Pastor and a staff of four paid Associate Ministers provide leadership to the Church.

During 2009, 123 people were fellowshiped as members of the Convent Church. As an Associate Minister of the Church and Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education, I do not see many of these new faces in the organized ministries of the Church or in leadership roles in these ministries. Convent is a church where four generations are operating at the same time. The current leadership must start to prepare other members to take their place. Succession planning must be put in place. As a leader in the Church, I am always looking to mentor new members; however there seems to be apathy when it comes to being active members and leaders in the Church. New members offer many reasons for not wanting to serve and help manage the business of the Church. Some of the more popular ones include, "I am too busy or I don't think I have the training and experience." I believe that we have a responsibility to equip those in the church with the necessary skills to become servants in the Church. Part of this equipping involves helping them understand that as Christians there is a call upon our lives to become servant leaders serving God and others. This project will offer training to new members of the congregation so that they can become viable and productive members of the Convent Church. My demonstration project will involve the development of discipleship training for new members as well as leadership training. The skills that these trainees will receive will help them become effective servant leaders in God's Church.



## **CHAPTER 3 PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Goals and Strategies and Assessment**

**Goal 1: To develop an awareness amongst the congregation of the concern that new members are not being integrated into the ministries within the church.**

#### **Strategy 1**

- A) Meet with the Executive Leadership (the Pastor or Executive Minister and Chair Board of Deacons) and make them aware of the concern regarding new members not being integrated into the ministries within the church. (Me, by March 31, 2011)

#### **Strategy 2:**

- A) Meet with the Leadership of the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters and make them aware of the concern regarding new members not being integrated into the ministries within the church. (Me, by March 31, 2011)

#### **Strategy 3:**

- A) Develop and distribute an informational flyer to church congregants via an insert in the church bulletin for a morning worship service regarding the concern regarding new members not being integrated into the ministries within the church. (Me, by April 30, 2011)

**Evaluation of Goal 1:**

- A) The documentation of input from at least two members of the Executive Leadership Team and at least two members of the Leadership team of the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters ministry.
- B) The distribution of an informational flyer describing the concern to at least one thousand congregants via the Church Bulletin

**Goal 2: To gather information from new members on their involvement in existing church ministries and solicit their interest in participating in a Discipleship Training Course.**

**Strategy 1:**

- A) I will develop and send out a survey that will be used to obtain information from the new members who have been fellowshipped into the church over the last two years to determine if they are actively involved in any of the ministries of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church. My Site Team will have input into the survey.  
(Me/ Site Team by May 1, 2011)

**Strategy 2:**

- A) I will solicit new members and current members to sign-up for the Discipleship Training Course by mailings to new members, by advertising in the church's echo and on the church's website. (Me, by July 31, 2011)

**Evaluation of Goal 2:**

- A) Recruit at least ten new members for the Pilot Discipleship Course.
- B) The development of a survey that has at least 20% open- ended questions so that qualitative data can be obtained as well as quantitative data.

C) A survey response rate of at least 30% from the new members.

**Goal 3: Conduct a pilot session of the Discipleship Course, which will probably encompass 8-12 weeks of one hour sessions.**

**Strategy 1:**

A) Review and collect any previous discipleship training materials that the Church has previously used and review them. (Me, by April 1, 2011)

**Strategy 2:**

A) Conduct a pilot Discipleship Training Course for a minimum of ten new members. (Me, Others by December 15, 2011)

**Strategy 3:**

A) Develop the Discipleship Training Manual as part of this demonstration project and have it approved by the Pastor. (Me, August 31, 2011)

B) Incorporate feedback from the Pilot Discipleship Course into the final

C) Version of the Discipleship Manual. (Me, by December 31, 2011)

**Evaluation of Goal 3:**

A) The actual development of a Discipleship Training Manual that consists of a minimum of five modules.

B) 2. The actual conduct of the Discipleship course and the completion of the course by at least ten new members who are not involved in any of the Church's ministries.

## **CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **Historical Research and Analysis**

#### **What factors are at work in the twenty-first century Baptist Church regarding volunteerism and lay member participation in ministry activities?**

The Baptist Church over the years has been able to carry-out the work of ministry through the education and empowerment of its members to work as servants and servant leaders. The majority of those serving in the Baptist Church are volunteers. Over the years this has seemed to work with some level of success. However, in the twenty-first century challenges such as technology, economic depression, the generation gap, multiculturalism and general apathy has had an impact on volunteerism in the Baptist Church. My demonstration project will examine volunteerism and lay participation in ministry activities in the Baptist denomination and my local congregation, the Convent Avenue Baptist Church.

### **Biblical/Theological**

#### **What are the New Testament biblical and theological models for empowering leaders in the twenty-first century church that involve preparing them for carrying-out the work of God?**

The New Testament gives us several examples of leaders who shared their leadership abilities and therefore enabled their subordinates to gain the necessary knowledge and experience so that they could advance the work of God. Some of these leaders include: Paul, Joseph, Peter and others. Of course the Leader par excellence is Jesus, the Christ.

The church over the years has been able to carry out the work of God through the empowerment of its members as servant leaders. Every member, whether a new member or existing member should be given the chance to develop their spiritual gifts through Christian education and the exercising of their gifts in ministry in the church. I believe that every church member has an obligation as part of their faith to serve God, the church and humankind. Serving or works will not save Christians, but it shows our total commitment to Christ. James 2:17-18, says, “So faith by itself, if it has no works is dead. But someone will say, You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.”

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know Einstein’s theory of relativity to serve. You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love.”<sup>39</sup>

I believe that it is only through teaching, preaching and training that we will be able to inform, educate and equip members in our churches to become leaders that will be able to carry out God’s work. Ephesians 4:11-12 says, “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” (NSRV)

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<sup>39</sup> Washington, *The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 265-266.

## **Practical Methodology**

### **What disciplines and resources can be used to help members in my local congregation reach their full potential as Disciples of Christ?**

Presently, new members are only required to attend a four session (one hour) orientation class before being accepted and fellowshiped as a member of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church. There is no advanced or continuing member development course available. Resources which include an effective Discipleship Course will have to be developed.

Some new members are reluctant to get actively involved in the ministry of the church because they lack the necessary foundational knowledge regarding Christian doctrine and beliefs. This Discipleship course will help them overcome that obstacle to serving in Christian ministry. This Discipleship Course will also provide an opportunity for new members and current members to build a foundation of knowledge and gain practical insights regarding what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in a local congregation. As part of my demonstration project, I will examine the psychological perspective of what motivates Christian believers to become active followers and learners in the church.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **EVALUATION PROCESS**

This demonstration project will engage members of the members of the Executive Leadership team, leaders of the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters Ministry in a dialogue regarding the lack of new members being integrated into ministries of the church. This demonstration project will also create an awareness of this issue by at least one thousand members of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church by April 30, 2011.

This demonstration project will conclude with the development of a Discipleship Course Training Manual and the conduct of a pilot Discipleship Course for at least ten new members by December 31, 2011.

This demonstration project will track the involvement of at least ten new members who completed the Discipleship Training Course to ascertain if they have joined a ministry of the church since being enrolled in the Discipleship Course. If at least one member has joined a ministry in the church, the strategy developed from this demonstration project can be considered useful and viable.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **MINISTERIAL COMPETENCES**

#### **The Process**

My Site Team members include: Mr. William Aiken, CPA, Deacon Barbara Bowland, Deacon Ellie Blake, Minister John Faison, Jr., Mrs. Cassandra Himmons, MSW, Mr. Craig Himmons, and Rev. Dr. Esteen Tapp. The Site Team members were given the Ministerial Competency information for their review and assessment of the Candidate. The Site Team members held several meetings with the Candidate where the competency assessments were discussed. The Site Team members were very thorough and honest in their assessments. All of the assessments were summarized and provided to all members. The group agreed on an overall summary statement of the assessments presented.

**A summary of the Site Team's assessments as well as mine are shown below.**

#### **As Theologian:**

Rev. Faison's sermons and prayers demonstrate theological knowledge. She has a way of relating Biblical texts to the modern world. Rev. Faison has demonstrated Biblical training and has a well-rounded background to affect the world positively when presenting issues. She has shown her desire to grow theologically by her pursuit of a Doctor of Ministry Degree at New York Theological Seminary. *The Candidate believes she should continue to develop in the area of other disciplines such as psychology.*



*As a Preacher/Interpreter of Sacred Texts* – Rev. Faison exegetes her pericope and relates her sermon to the topic effectively. It is evident through her congregational prayers and the Preached Word that she and her messages are spirit filled, biblically-based and reach to the uttermost depths of our contemporary concerns where the listeners are empowered to move forward in their Christian walk and growth. Rev. Faison's sermon delivery style is most effective because she has the ability to teach while preaching. *The Candidate wants to address contemporary concerns in a more direct manner in her sermons.*

### **As Worship Leader**

Rev. Faison adheres to the order of service, fulfilling various leadership roles in an effective manner. She has demonstrated her ability to plan, lead and carry-out worship services by presiding, dedicating babies and preaching at the same time. She is very helpful with moving worshippers through the worship experience. *The Candidate would like the opportunity to broaden her skills in this area by performing a wedding ceremony or presiding at a funeral.*

### **As Prophetic Agent**

Rev. Faison is committed to the development of her local community and is well aware of its needs which are many. She is also aware of global issues, but focuses more on the local community. Rev. Faison would be more effective if she related her sermons to issues and problems present in the world and offered biblically-based solutions to help cure them. *The Candidate wants to include global issues in her preaching in an effective way.*

**As Leader**

Rev. Faison has served in many leadership roles in the Convent Avenue Baptist Church, including Deacon, Deaconess, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Teacher, Church Anniversary Journal Chairperson and Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education. In these roles she has motivated others to become leaders. She is always positive in providing encouragement and has the capacity to become a greater leader by further developing her skills to motivate others to grow their spiritual gifts. *The Candidate wants to grow in the leadership role.*

**As a Religious Educator**

From Rev. Faison's sermons and her biblical teaching it can be ascertained that she has a very keen understanding of the learning process across human life. She conveys the Bible in a way that enables laypersons as well as biblical scholars to learn. Rev. Faison is concise and clear in the way she speaks as well as the way she teaches. She has offered religious guidance in many ways, including her role as Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education. *The Candidate would like to make more use of audio/visual aids in teaching.*

**As Counselor**

Rev. Faison dedicates children and guides their parents and godparents with "rich" counsel to strengthen them and direct them about the need to walk close to the Lord in the interest of the child and themselves. She is approachable and is willing to take time to speak with or counsel others. *The Candidate wants to strengthen her counseling skills.*

**As Pastor**

Rev. Faison is an Associate Minister at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church. She preaches, teaches, carries out the Ordinance of Baptism and helps serve Communion, when called upon. At the Greater Universal Baptist Church she has presided over Communion. Rev. Faison previously served as the monthly preacher at the Greater Harlem Nursing Home. Her primary role at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church is that of Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education. *The Candidate would like to enhance her gift of hospitality.*

**As Spiritual Leader**

Rev. Faison is familiar with the practice of her own religious community. She has served in many roles as a spiritual leader including worship leader and Bible Study teacher. In addition, Rev. Faison has served effectively in leading Deacons' Retreats, and Board of Christian Education programs. *The Candidate wants to learn more about the spiritual traditions and practices of other faith traditions.*

**As an Ecumenist**

Rev. Faison is aware of her faith tradition and the need of individuals within that faith tradition and the Convent Avenue Baptist Church. Although, she is aware of other religious traditions and global issues, her focus is more localized. With the changing face of our community due to immigration and gentrification, it would be helpful if she sharpened her knowledge of other faiths and religious institutions. *The Candidate sees the need to learn more about other faith traditions and to attend other faith tradition services as available.*

**As a Witness or Evangelist**

Rev. Faison is a witness for Jesus Christ and works with the other members of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church to spread the Word of His works. She witnesses through her delivery of the Word and her Christian walk. Rev. Faison has invited many to the Church who were of different faiths. Rev. Faison could further develop in this area by including social issues and possible solutions in her proclamations. *The Candidate wants to become more involved in witnessing in a deliberate manner to those outside the walls of the church.*

**As an Administrator**

Rev. Faison has served in high-level positions at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church including Chair of the Board of Trustees, member of the Deacon's Ministry and Chair of the Board of Christian Education. During her tenure as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, she strengthened the church's financial position. *The Candidate would like to improve her organizational skills.*

**As a Professional**

Rev. Faison is able to effectively communicate using the written word or verbally. She performs tasks when asked to do so. Rev. Faison is personable and respectful in her relationship with others. She is the consummate professional. Rev. Faison is a great listener and wonderful communicator on a corporate and personal level. *The Candidate needs to be more intentional about limiting her workload.*

The process of assessment by others gives us an opportunity to see how we are perceived by others. I found this process useful to me and my ministry. I would like to thank my Site Team for their openness and honesty in their assessment of me and my ministerial competencies and capabilities.

## **Competencies Chosen for Development**

**Competency I: As a Preacher/Interpreter of Sacred Texts--To prepare sermons that address contemporary concerns and offer biblical solutions to them.**

### **Strategies:**

- A) Prepare two sermons that address contemporary concerns, with Biblical Solutions to those concerns.
- B) Record the two sermons and distribute them to my Site Team and at least two members of the congregation for their critique.
- C) Preach one of the sermons if given the opportunity to do so before completion of this demonstration project.

### **Evaluation:**

- A) I will solicit a written assessment of the sermons from the Site Team and the other people who receive the recorded version of the sermon. These written assessments should show that the sermon addresses contemporary concerns and provides Biblical solutions to those concerns.

**Competency II: As an Ecumenist – To learn how another faith tradition addresses discipleship and training of its new members.**

### **Strategies:**

- A) Interview at least one leader of a faith tradition other than Baptist and ascertain how they address discipleship and training in their congregation.
- B) Compare the information obtained to how we address discipleship and training in our congregation.

### **Evaluation:**

A) The attainment of discipleship and training information from at least one other non-Baptist faith tradition.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX 1

### TIMELINE

November 15, 2010	My Site Team Meeting
November 19, 2010	My Site Team Meeting
December 03, 2010	My Site Team Meeting
January 03, 2011	My Site Team Meeting
January 14, 2011	My Site Team Meeting
February 01, 2011	My Site Team Meeting
February 17, 2011	Meeting with Mentor
By March 31, 2010	Meet with Executive Leadership Team members to make them aware of the concern and my Demonstration Project
By March 31, 2011	Meet with Leaders of Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters to make them aware of the concern and my Demonstration Project
By March 31, 2011	Site Team Meeting
By April 01, 2011	Collect previously used Discipleship Training Materials and complete a review of them
By April 30, 2011	Develop and distribute information flyer that discusses the concern to at least 1000 congregants via the Church Bulletin
By April 30, 2011	Gather feedback from the Executive Leadership Team and the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters
By April 30, 2011	Site Team Meeting



By April 30, 2011	Contact potential Teachers for the pilot Discipleship Course.
By May 01, 2011	Mail survey to approximately two hundred new members with a requested return date of May 20, 2011.
By May 31, 2011	Site Team Meeting
By June 15, 2011	Summarize the survey results.
By June 30, 2011	Confirm Teachers for pilot Discipleship Course.
By June 30, 2011	Site Team Meeting
By June 30, 2011	Order Binders for Discipleship Course
By July 31, 2011	Meet with Church's Executive Leadership Team and Big Brothers and Big Sisters to share survey results.
By July 31, 2011	Solicit new members and current members to sign-up for the Discipleship Course. Send mailings to new members and place a notice in the Church Bulletin and on the Church's website.
By July 31, 2011	Site Team Meeting
By Aug. 31, 2011	Develop a draft Discipleship Training Manual
By Aug. 31, 2011	Have Discipleship Course material printed.
By Sept. 30, 2011	Travel to Philadelphia to interview a Pastor who has a successful intake and discipleship program.
By Sept. 30, 2011	Site Team Meeting
Sept. 2011-Dec. 2011 Conduct the pilot Discipleship Training	
By Oct. 31, 2011	Site Team Meeting
By Dec. 31, 2011	Incorporate feedback from the student

	participants into the revised Discipleship Training Manual
By Jan. 31, 2012	Site Team Meeting
By Jan. 31, 2012	Submit revised Discipleship Training Manual to the Pastor
By Mar. 31, 2012	Submit Completed Write-up of Demonstration Project

**APPENDIX 2**  
**BUDGET**

Instructors for twelve Discipleship Training Sessions (pro bono)	\$1,200.00
Space Rental Fee for Training Sessions (pro bono)	900.00
Mentor Fee (paid by NYTS)	800.00
Reference Books	750.00
Refreshments for Training Sessions (Continental Breakfast)	600.00
Copies (survey, inserts, manual)	400.00
Folders for Discipleship Course	400.00
Postage for mailing surveys	200.00
Trip to Philadelphia for Interview	160.00
Refreshments for Spiritual Big Bros./Big Sisters Mtg.	150.00
Total	\$5,560.00

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**APPENDIX B**  
**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

<b>Convent Avenue Baptist Church</b> 420 West 145 <sup>th</sup> Street New York, New York 10031 Rev. Dr. Jesse T. Williams, Jr., Pastor <b><u>APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP</u></b>					
Date: _____		Interviewer: _____			
Name: (Print) _____ <div style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">First Middle Last</div>					
Address _____		Apt.# _____			
City: _____		State: _____	Zip: _____		
Home Phone ( ) _____		Work Phone ( ) _____			
Cell Phone ( ) _____		Email Address: _____			
Date of Birth _____	Place of Birth: _____	City _____	State _____ Country _____		
Occupation _____		Employer: _____			
Joined This Church By (Please Check One) <input type="radio"/> Baptism <input type="radio"/> Letter					
<input type="radio"/> Christian Experience <input type="radio"/> Restoration					
Former Church: _____					
City: _____		State: _____	Country: _____		
Will attend orientation classes on (Check one)					
<input type="radio"/> Thursdays	7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	425 West 144 <sup>th</sup> Street – Room 102			
<input type="radio"/> Sundays (Adults)	9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor M. L. Wilson Walkway			
<input type="radio"/> Sundays (Children)	9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	425 West 144 <sup>th</sup> St. 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor Room 4			
Reason Applicant came forward? _____					
_____					
What areas of the church and its' ministries are you interested in getting involved with?					
_____					
Applicants' Signature: _____					
<b><u>ORIENTATION PROGRESS REPORT</u></b>					
<input type="radio"/> Lesson 1	Date _____	Note _____	<input type="radio"/> Lesson 3	Date _____	Note _____
<input type="radio"/> Lesson 2	Date _____	Note: _____	<input type="radio"/> Lesson 4	Date _____	Note _____
<input type="radio"/> Baptized	Date: _____	Note: _____	<input type="radio"/> Fellowshiped	Date _____	Note _____
White- New Members Ministry    Yellow-Pastor    Pink – Deacons    Blue – Church Clerk					

**APPENDIX C**  
**BACK COVER OF CONVENT CHURCH BULLETIN**

**SERMON NOTES**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Preacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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RESPONSE TO THE SERMON ~ At the end of today's sermon, an invitation to Christian Discipleship will be given. You can invite Christ into your life by coming forward. If you are already a disciple of Christ, but not presently a member of a church, you can join our fellowship by also coming forward when the invitation is given.

**APPENDIX D**  
**NEW MEMBER LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE**

October 7, 2011

Ms. Jane Doe  
123 Main Street  
Apt.  
Anytown, NY 10000

Dear Sis. Doe,

I greet you in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.  
First, let me introduce myself. I am Reverend Charlene Faison, the Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education here at Convent. Our Pastor, the Reverend Dr. Jesse T. Williams, Jr. is allowing me to write to you and gather some basic information and to ascertain your interest in a newly planned Discipleship Training Course that culminates with the awarding of a certificate of completion.

The new Discipleship Course is being designed specifically for you and the Convent Church family as part of my Seminary work. If you participate in the first offering of this course in November 2011, you will have an opportunity to have your input incorporated into the final version of the course.

Enclosed is a short questionnaire that we would like for you to complete so that we can continue to address the spiritual development of our church family members. Please take a few minutes to fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me the stamped, self-addressed envelope by October 28, 2011.

May God continue to bless you and your family.

Many Blessings,

Reverend Charlene Faison  
Chairperson Board of Christian Education  
Convent Avenue Baptist Church

cc: Pastor Jesse T. Williams, Jr.

QUESTIONNAIRE No. \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain some basic information and ascertain the interest of our new members in participating in a Discipleship Course that will add to their spiritual development by teaching them how to grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ.

1. Please list your church membership number which is your church envelope number

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How long have you been a member of Convent Avenue Baptist Church?

\_\_\_\_\_years    \_\_\_\_\_months

3. Education

Please check one:

- \_\_\_\_\_Some High School
- \_\_\_\_\_Graduated High School or G.E.D
- \_\_\_\_\_Attended or Graduated Technical School
- \_\_\_\_\_Finished 2 yr. College
- \_\_\_\_\_Finished 4yr. College
- \_\_\_\_\_Finished Graduate or Professional School

4. Which one of the following help influenced your joining the Convent Avenue Baptist Church?

Please check the appropriate item(s) below:

- \_\_\_\_\_The Worship Service
- \_\_\_\_\_Church's physical location
- \_\_\_\_\_The Pastor
- \_\_\_\_\_The outreach ministries of the church (e.g. Evangelism, Prison Ministry, Substance Abuse Ministry, Homeless Ministry, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_I have family who are members
- \_\_\_\_\_I have friends who are members
- \_\_\_\_\_The members are friendly and hospitable
- \_\_\_\_\_The opportunity for spiritual development
- \_\_\_\_\_Heard worship service on Internet or Radio, TV or Internet
- \_\_\_\_\_Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Listed below are several programs and activities of the church.

Please check the ones you currently attend.

- \_\_\_\_\_8 AM Sunday Worship Service
- \_\_\_\_\_11 AM Sunday Worship Service

\_\_\_\_\_ 5 PM Sunday Service  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wednesday Chapel at the Crossroads  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wednesday 1:30 PM Bible Study  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wed. 6:30 PM Bible Study  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wednesday 7:30 PM Prayer Meeting  
\_\_\_\_\_ Choir Member  
\_\_\_\_\_ Usher Board Member  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other Church Group (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

6. One of the main responsibilities of the church is to make disciples (followers) for Christ and to prepare them to be involved in the church and the community and to help them nurture their spiritual gifts. Would you be interested in participating in a Discipleship Course that will help you grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ which would be conducted for a period of ten to twelve weeks, with a certificate being awarded after completion of the course

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would be interested in attending a Discipleship Course at Convent Avenue Baptist Church. This course would instruct Christians on how to live for Jesus every day.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I would not be interested in attending a Discipleship Course at Convent Avenue Baptist Church

7. If you are interested in attending a Discipleship Course at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church which time would be more convenient for you?

\_\_\_\_\_ Sundays 9:30 AM during the Sunday School hour  
\_\_\_\_\_ Saturday Mornings at 10AM- 11AM  
\_\_\_\_\_ Any evening during the week (6:30 PM- 7:30 PM)

8. If you are not interested in attending a Discipleship Course, please explain why?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Please print your Name if you would like to: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Would you like to share any comments? \_\_\_\_\_



Please return this survey in the stamped and self-addressed return envelope by October 21, 2011, to the following address:

Rev. Charlene Faison  
Chairperson, Board of Christian Education  
Convent Avenue Baptist Church  
420 West 145th Street  
New York, NY 10031

Thank you for completing this survey and returning it to the Convent Church. Your responses will facilitate our planning of the Discipleship Course and the planning for the spiritual growth of our Convent Church family. May God continue to bless you.

**APPENDIX E**  
**INSERT FOR CONVENT ORDER OF SERVICE**  
**NEWS FROM THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

Greetings in the Name of Our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

We thank God that He has blessed the Convent Church Family in many ways. Recently He blessed us with an excellent Christian Education Week where we explored the theme, "Hospitality Starts with You."

The Lord continues to bless us with new members to the Convent Family. Every first Sunday we joyfully set a few more places at the Lord's Communion Table. We as a Church are striving to carry out the Great Commission that Jesus left for us to carry out by making new disciples for Him. As we rejoice over those who give their lives to Christ and unite with the Convent Church family, we are concerned that many of our new family members are not being integrated to the fullest into the church's ministries. We believe that in order to be all that God wants you to be, you have to study God's Word and you have to grow in the grace and knowledge of Him. One way to do this is to get involved in the study of the Word.

Currently, I am working on a demonstration project as part of my continued Seminary Studies that involves **"Disciple Training as a Tool for Congregational Development and Training."** This project will conclude with the conduct of a pilot disciple course that a Certificate is awarded after successful completion. Some of the topics covered will include: (1) What it means to be a Disciple? (2) Having a Disciple's Personality, (3) If you want to learn more about what it takes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and how to live the Christian life by participating in this course, please fill out the attached form and place it in the offering basket or give it to an Usher after the service. The Discipleship Course will be a minimum of eight weeks based on the pace of the class. The class will start in January 2012. It will either be on Thursday evening at 6:30 P.M.-7:30 P.M. or Sunday morning at 9:30 A.M. – 10:30 A.M. I pray that you will sign up for this new Discipleship Course on the attached form. It will be a blessing to you and the Convent Church family.

Reverend Charlene Faison  
Chairperson, Board of Christian Education

Please Tear Off here. Place form in Offering Basket or give to an Usher. Thank You.

-----  
Yes, I am interested in The Disciple Training Course. Sign Me Up.

My Name is: (Mr.) (Mrs.) (Ms.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. Area Code \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

You will receive a confirmation letter by mail before January 1, 2012.

**APPENDIX F**  
**NEWS ABOUT THE NEW DISCIPLESHIP COURSE**

January 30, 2012

**My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

**I** greet you in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

**First,** let me thank you for signing up to be a participant in the Discipleship Course.

**Secondly,** we have been blessed with such a tremendous response to the course that we will not be able to accommodate everyone in the first course offering. However, we are examining ways in which we can accommodate everyone as soon as possible this year. We thank God that He continues to bless Convent with family members who are interested in growing spiritually and learning about what is required to be a Disciple of Jesus, the Christ.

**The** course originally scheduled to start on February 5, 2012 will now start on February 26, 2012 at 9:30 AM and last for ten weeks. In this first course offering we will be able to accommodate most of the members who joined Convent in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. These members will receive class location and introductory information before February 26, 2012.

**Members** who joined Convent before 2008 will be accommodated in a second and third offering of the Discipleship course after the first course is completed. Members who joined Convent in 2012 and signed up for the Discipleship course will also be included. Your name and address will be kept on the list and you will be given priority for the next course offerings this year. Status updates will be provided throughout the year in our church Echo.

**We** solicit your patience and prayers in this matter.

Reverend Charlene Faison  
Chairperson Board of Christian Education  
Convent Avenue Baptist Church

cc: Reverend Dr. Jesse T. Williams, Jr.  
Senior Pastor  
Convent Avenue Baptist Church

**APPENDIX G**  
**DISCIPLESHIP COURSE ENROLLMENT CONFIRMATION LETTER**

February 20, 2012

Dear

I greet you in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

I am pleased to confirm your enrollment in the Discipleship Course which you signed up for.

**The first class will start on Sunday, February 26, 2012 at 9:30 AM. Sharp and end at 10:40 A.M. for ten Sundays.** If you are participating in a Sunday school class already, please let your Sunday School Teacher know that you will be attending the Discipleship course for ten Sundays.

**The Discipleship class will be conducted in the classroom on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor walkway.** You can get to this location by leaving the Main Sanctuary through the door to the right of the pulpit. Once in the walkway please take the steps across from the Deacon's Room up to the classroom on the third floor.

**It is necessary that you attend all ten classes and complete the course in order to receive your Certificate.**

**Please bring your Bible to class with you.** During our first session together will make some time to get to know each other by sharing the following information. Please complete the questions on the attachment to this letter and bring it with you to class on Feb. 26, 2012.

**I look forward to seeing you on Sunday, February 26, 2012.** Please come prepared to discover what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus the Christ. **Please keep this course in prayer.**

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to e-mail me at \_\_\_\_\_ or call me at 000-000-0000.

May God continue to bless you.

Many Blessings,

Reverend Charlene Faison  
Chairperson Board of Christian Education  
Convent Avenue Baptist Church

cc: Reverend Dr. Jesse T. Williams, Jr., Senior Pastor  
Rev. James Logan, Jr.  
Rev. Booker T. Morgan,  
Deacon Lawrence C. Hudson  
Bro. Lloyd Harrison

**Please answer the questions below and bring these responses with you to class on Sunday, February 26, 2012.**

1. Why do you want to be in this Discipleship Course?
2. What will be your greatest challenge in completing this course?
3. Are you committed to completing this course?

## **APPENDIX H**

### **LESSON PLANS**

The Lesson Plans included in this Appendix contain a summary of material included the book, *MasterLife: Developing a Rich Personal Relationship with the Master* by Avery T. Willis, Jr., and Sherrie Willis Brown. These lesson plans were used in conjunction with a hard copy of this book. Some additional information included in these lesson plans on Prayer and How to Study the Bible are summarized from material from the former Convent Avenue Baptist Church Foundations for Christian Living Course.

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION

MODULE 2: THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS

MODULE 3: THE DISCIPLE'S PERSONALITY

MODULE 4: THE DISCIPLE'S VICTORY

MODULE 5: THE DISCIPLE'S MISSION

## **The Discipleship Course**

### Session 1: Introduction and the Disciples' Cross

Objectives of this session:

1. To introduce the students to the *MasterLife* program
2. To inform students of the requirements for completion of the course
3. To explore the Disciples' Cross
4. To define the word disciple and explore the practical ways of developing a deeper relationship with Christ

Materials:

Copy of Course book, "*MasterLife*" by Avery T. Willis and Sherrie Willis Brown  
Copy of Holy Bible  
Pad of Paper for note taking  
Small notepad for journaling  
Pen or Pencil for note taking

### **Scripture References:**

Matthew 28:18-20

Luke 9:23

John 15:4-5

John 1:1,14

Psalms 143:8

Psalms 119:9, 11

1 Peter 3:15

Deut. 6:6

Hebrews 5:7-9

Mark 1:35

Isaiah 57:15

Psalms 100

Isaiah 6:4-6

## Introduction

This program is based on the MasterLife Discipleship program by Dr. Avery T. Willis, Jr. *MasterLife* is a program that is used to develop disciples who make Christ the Master of their life and thereby develop a personal on-going relationship with the Lord. We will be using the book, “MasterLife, Developing a Rich Personal Relationship with the Master” by Dr. Avery T. Willis, Jr. with Ms. Sherrie Willis Brown, who is Dr. Willis’ second child. Books will be loaned to you and must be returned at the end of the course. We must be good stewards of the resources that the Lord has given to us.

Course Requirements: All students must attend each session for the ten weeks. If for some reason a student cannot attend a session, they will be given questions to answer as a way to make up a session. No more than two sessions can be missed. Sometimes Jesus’ disciples had to learn how to be disciples. Sometimes they put their needs before Jesus’ needs.

The MasterLife Program is made up of four components. They are as follows:

The Disciple’s Cross explains how to practice the six biblical disciplines.

The Disciple’s Personality shows you how to be more like Christ.

The Disciple’s Victory shows how we can triumph over the world and Satan.

The Disciple’s Mission shows you how to identify your own stage of spiritual growth and how to be effective in ministry.

Christian discipleship must become a way of life for us. It’s not something you study and then forget about. It has to be practiced. Just as we learned how to read and write



through repetition. Well, this discipleship course is about learning and practicing disciplines that will make us effective disciples that Jesus would be proud of.

Discussion of Questions that were sent with the confirmation letter to students.

1. Why do you want to be in this Discipleship Course?
2. What will be your greatest challenge in completing this course?
3. Are you committed to completing this course?

**DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING CLASS**  
**SESSION NO. 2 THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS - continued**

**Learning Goals:**

Participants will be able to

- Explain the meaning and work of a Christian Disciple
- Discuss practical ways to develop a deeper relationship with Christ

**Scripture References:**

Luke 9:23

John 15:4-5

John 1:1,14

Psalm 143:8

Psalm 119:9, 11

1 Peter 3:15

Deut. 6:6

Hebrews 5:7-9

Mark 1:35

Isaiah 57:15

Psalm 100

Isaiah 6:4-6

**WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?**

- Term used to describe a committed follower of a teacher or group. (Mark 2:18)
- Disciple refers to Jesus' twelve apostles whom He appointed. (Mark 3:14)
- Term Jesus used to describe a follower who meets His requirements, forsaking all else to follow Him. (Luke 14:25-27)

**RELATIONSHIP OF A DISCIPLE**

- We are to love Christ so much more than anything or anyone.
- Our relationship with Christ must surpass any other relationship.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches, He that abideth in me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5 KJV)

- DENY (Luke 9:23)
- CROSS (Luke 4:14:27)
- FOLLOW (Matthew 4:19)
- If you can count to six, you can master the *MasterLife* Discipleship program.

**Let's start counting.....**

**#1. One Lord- Abiding in Christ**

**“I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5)**

There is one Lord. We should worship Him in Spirit and truth. He has to be at the center of our lives. All other people or things have to take second place.

The MasterLife Course has the Disciple's Cross as its foundation. Christ is in the Center.

**#2. Two Relationships**

We are engaged in two relationships. Our primary relationship is with God. He is our Heavenly Father who is truly concerned about us in every way. He is the one who we pray to and He answers our prayers according to His will. We understand more about God, our Heavenly Father by reading and meditating on His Word. Our second relationship is with our fellow sisters and brothers. We can have fellowship with them and reach out to them in order to get them to believe in Jesus, if they are not believers in Jesus the Christ.

**“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” John 14:21**

**#3. There are three commitments as Christians we must make.**

(1) We must commit to walk as disciples of Jesus Christ, (2) we must deny ourselves, and (3) take up our cross daily and follow Jesus.

**“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23**

**#4. There are four resources that help become disciples of Christ and carry out our three commitments**

(1) Prayer- we can always pray to God for his help and direction. **“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” John 15:7**

(2) The Word of God- we read and meditate on the God’s Word in order to get His direction for our lives and to get strength.

**“Then Jesus said to those Jews which believeth on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31-32**

(3) Fellowship- we fellowship with other believers by sharing our testimony and continue to encourage them to follow Christ.

**“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another: as I have loved You, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13:34-35**

(4) Evangelism- we reach out to others to tell them about Christ and encourage them to accept Jesus and become one of His disciples.

**“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13**

**#5. Five ministries that can help us grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ**

- 1) Worship/Intercession- we pray for others, (2) Nurture- we help others to learn more about Jesus, (3) Teaching/Preachers- the proclaiming of the message of God's salvation to all people, (4) Evangelism- we tell others about the sacrifice that Jesus made for them and us, and (5) Service- we are saved by grace through faith, not of works, but if we are saved we will do good works. It is through the works and service to others that we grow in the love of Jesus Christ.

**#6. There are six spiritual disciplines. Discipline is critical to our becoming disciples of Christ.**

- (1) Christ must always be the center of our life,
- (2) We must always pray
- (3) We must read the Bible (His Word) daily,
- (4) We must fellowship with other believers,
- (5) We must Evangelize,
- (6) We must become servants in the ministry of Christ.

**Questions for Discussion:**

- A. What is a Disciple?
- B. What is Christian Discipleship?
- C. What is the Relationship of a Disciple to Christ?
- D. Discuss the Disciple's Cross

The four points of the cross are: Prayer, Word, Witness and Fellowship.

- E. Discuss Abiding in Christ.

- Deny – Luke 9:23
- Cross- Luke 14:27
- Follow- Matthew 4:19

1. Do you have an appointment with God?
2. How to develop \Quiet Time with God?
3. Being Led by the Spirit

#### **F. Living in the Word**

1. God has revealed himself to us through Jesus Christ. John 1:1, 14 and Hebrews 1:3. As Christian Disciples we here at Convent have adopted the Articles of Faith as our foundational beliefs. The first Article is the Scriptures, the Second, the true God. It is not by chance that God is not the first Article. It is because it is through the Scriptures we learn of God and his work in the world.
  2. The Word of God- John 8:31-32
  3. Meditating on the Word of God
  4. Memorizing the Word of God
  5. Obeying the Word of God
- Abiding in Christ (John 15:5)
    - Spending Time with the Master
    - How to Develop a Quiet Time
    - Being Led by the Spirit

## **PRAYER**

Prayer is talking to God. Prayer is a part of God's program for us. God encourages us to act on His Word. Prayer is a spiritual exercise, your spirit is contacting the Father.

- **“Men ought always to pray and not faith.” Luke 18:1**
- **“Memorizing puts God's Word in your head. Meditating puts it in your heart.”**
- **“Developing daily habits of reading and studying the Scriptures help you live in the**
- **Word.”**

### **Why Should We Pray?**

- - Men ought always to pray and not faith (Luke 18:1)
- God instructs us to pray. Pray without ceasing. (1 Thess. 5:17)
- If my people...(2 Chron.7:14)
- -Confess your faults one to another (James 5:16)

### **How Should I Pray?**

- Instruction concerning Prayer (Matthew 6:5-13)

## **FIVE ELEMENTS OF PRAYER:**

**1. Praise-** Matthew 6:9b; Psalm 6:3, Hebrews 13:15. All prayer should begin with a recognition of God's nature. Praise is that aspect of prayer which vocally esteems God for His virtues and accomplishments.

**2. Confession-** Psalm 139: 23, 24, Psalm 51:10, 11, 1 John 1:9. The Psalmist asked God to search his heart for un-confessed sin. He knew sin was one of the greatest road blocks

to answered prayer. Early in prayer we need to make time for confession. This clears the way for powerful prayer.

**3. Intercession-** 1 Timothy 2:1, 2, Psalm 2:8, Matthew 9:37-38. This concerns praying for others who have needs.

**4. Petition-** Matthew 7:7, Matthew 6:11, James 4:2. This aspect of prayer concerns our personal needs. Petition is included in the Lord's Prayer in the expression: "Give us this day our daily bread."

**5. Thanksgiving-** Phil 4:6, Psalm 100:4. Thanksgiving differs from praise in that praise recognizes God for who He is, while thanksgiving recognizes God for His provisions for us, and blessings upon us.

**KEY ELEMENT IN PRAYER IS FAITH-** Faith moves the hand of God, God keeps His promises to those who exercise faith in prayer. Faith is always honored by God (Mark 11:24; Hebrew 11:1, 1 John 5:14-15).

The Word ACTS can be used as an outline for Prayer.

**A** - Adoration toward God

**C** - Confession of our personal sin

**T** - Thanks to God

**S** - Supplication – Intercession on behalf of yourself and others



## HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

**Successful Bible Study is accomplished only through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.**

God is the Author of the Holy Scriptures (the Bible), and “who can know the mind of God, except the Spirit of God”?

### **Scriptures to review:**

Psalm 119:18

2Peter 3:18

Psalm 119:105

Ephesians 2:10

2 Timothy 2:15

### **Ways of Study:**

#### **1. Personal Bible Study**

Devotional Bible Study means reading and studying the Word in order that we may hear God’s voice and that we may know how to do His will and live the Christian life. Devotional Bible study is a very important kind of Bible study.

**2. Family/Group Bible Study** strengthens home relationships and glorifies God. At a convenient time Christian parents should lead their family in worship of God by singing, praying and reading and explaining passages of the Bible. The study should be kept brief, and be focused on a short passage of Scripture, especially if young children are in the home.

**3. Interpretive Bible** – The need to clearly interpret the Bible passages is due to certain gaps that have occurred over the passage of time. Many people, led by the Holy Spirit, wrote the Bible over a period of 1500 years; the last author died some 1900 years ago. Pay close attention to the difference in the words we use today. Some of the rivers mentioned in the Bible have dried up. Many places have different names now.

**Memorizing Scripture:**

1. Choose a verse that speaks to you or one that the Lord points out to you.
2. Read the verse and understand the verse. Read it in a modern translation of the Bible if you can.
3. Write the verse on a card or record it on a tape or CD and review it over and over.
4. Practice reciting the verse over and over until you have it memorized. Practice it when performing your chores around the house.
6. Have a family member or friend check your reciting of the verse.
7. Know it's time to memorize a second verse.

**Developing Quiet Time in Order to:**

1. Find Direction in the Word of God
2. Meditate on the Word of God
3. Memorize the Scripture
4. Obey the Word

**- The Disciple's Personality shows you how to be more like Christ**

- The Disciple's Victory shows how we can triumph over the world and Satan
- The Disciple's Mission shows you how to identify your own stage of spiritual growth and how to be effective in ministry.

Your Personality

Body

Soul

Spirit

The Natural Person

Characteristics of God's Will

Fulfilling God's Purpose

Committing Your Personality

**RENEWING YOUR MIND**

- The Natural Mind
- Ruled by the Flesh
- The Worldly Christian
- The Mind of Christ
- Mastering Your Mind
- The Renewal Process

**How to Renew Your Mind**

Replace ungodly thoughts with Scripture or Christ-like thoughts.

- Sing songs of Praise
- Start quoting Scripture
- Pray- Claim the mind of Christ
- Set your mind on things above, Count your blessings
- Ask a friend or family member to pray with you even over the phone
- Help someone in need. Start thinking of how you can bless someone

## **How to Resist Temptation**

Practical steps to allow the Spirit to activate the mind of Christ when you tempted to act in harmful ways.

- Pray for grace in your time of need  
(Hebrews 4:16)
- Express humility and your dependence  
on God (James 4:10)
- Adopt God's attitude and choose His response  
toward the temptation (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- Ask the Holy Spirit to impress you with a way to deal  
with the temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- As for God to walk with you past the temptation (James 4:7-8)

### **Practical ways to resist temptation (cont'd)**

- Look for Scripture to claim during the  
temptation (Psalm 119:9-11)
- Ask God to help you focus on His will  
(Philippians 2:13)
- Acknowledge and ask forgiveness for  
thinking about the temptation  
(1John 1:9) Repent often
- Obey God's command, knowing you are in  
spiritual warfare (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

## **Mastering Your Emotions**

The Spiritual Christian Stepping into Action

Acknowledge the emotion

Consider why you have it

Thank God that He will help you master it

Identify with the Biblical response to it

Obey the Holy Spirit's leading

Nurture the appropriate fruit of the Spirit

## **What it means to Be Filled with the Spirit**

- Every person who has been born of the  
Spirit has the Holy Spirit living in his or  
her heart. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)
- Distinct difference between having the  
Spirit of God and being filled with the  
Spirit of God.
- Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came  
in His fullness upon the church (Acts 1:8)

### **The Work of the Spirit**

- Helps you to understand Spiritual things  
(1 Corinthians 2:14)
- Convicts the world of unrighteousness  
(John 16:8-1)
- A true disciple lets the Spirit of God continually fill and control his or her entire personality.

### **How to Be Filled**

- Confess your sin (1 John 1:9)
- Present every part of your body to be a righteous instrument to the Lord  
(Romans 12:1)
- Ask God to control and empower you and believe God has heard your prayer (Luke 11:13)

### **God fills you to develop Christ-like character.**

Every believer has at least one Spiritual Gift.

The word “gifts” is from the Greek word, Charismatic.  
First Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 list many of the Spiritual gifts.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How does God's will differ from a person's will? Why does God want you to do His will?
2. Discuss the difficulties in doing God's will.
3. Why can't good deeds alone cause a person in the flesh to please God?
4. Does letting Christ have control of our minds mean we are giving up part of our mental or intellectual capacities?
5. Why is the Bible important to renewing your mind?
6. How does a spiritual Christian master his or her emotions?
7. Can the body sin without the soul being involved?
8. Review the list of the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. Find synonyms for the nine nouns in those verses.

## **The Disciple's Victory**

**- The Disciple's Victory shows you how to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil in spiritual warfare**

Overcoming the Enemy

### **• Who is the Enemy?**

- Satan, also known as the devil.  
(1 Chronicles 21:1, Job 1-2; Eph. 6:11)
- Scripture calls Satan the wicked one, the destroyer, the enemy of our souls...
- Satan is powerful and highly intelligent being (Genesis 3:1-5)

### **What is Spiritual Warfare?**

- As a disciple you are at war with Satan.
- Spiritual warfare is the conflict between the forces of God and the forces of Satan, with the goal being victory in Christ. Ephesians 6:12
- As a disciple of Christ you are called to defeat Satan and his evil forces.

The battle is spiritual and your weapons have to be spiritual and capable of tearing down strongholds.

- Strongholds are an idea, a thought process, a habit or an addiction through which Satan has set up occupancy in your life- a place where he has an advantage. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

### **Personal Strongholds**

Areas of your life in which you are most vulnerable to Satan's attacks.

- Ideological Strongholds

Systems of thoughts and ideas that are embodied within cultures that exert pressure on members of that culture.

These can be economic, educational, etc.;

Cosmic Strongholds

Satan rules a group of evil spirits that with the aid of humankind establishes a counter-culture of sin, defying God's

righteous order.

- The Holy Spirit of God, through the victory of Jesus Christ is more powerful than any Satanic spirit.
  - Be alert to the Enemy and his workers.
  - God equips Christians so they can win spiritual warfare over and over til He comes again.
- Putting on the Spiritual Armor – Clothing yourself with Jesus (Ephesians 6:10-18)

### **Defensive Armor**

- The Helmet of Salvation- protects your mind. (1 Corinthians 2:16)
- The Breastplate of Righteousness- protects your heart and your will. (2Cor.5:21)
- The Belt of Truth protects your emotions. Truth includes integrity and moral upright-ness (John 8:32)

### **Offensive Armor**

- The Gospel Shoes for your ready feet. (1 Timothy 2:1,3,4)
  - The Shield of Faith – covers the front of your body. (Mark 11:24)
  - The Sword of the Spirit – The Word of God. (Hebrews 4:12)
- Christ has won the battle over all evil powers and gives victory to Christians who totally depend on Him and use the Spiritual weapons He provides them.
    - Spiritual battles begin with or should quickly move to Prayer.
      - Praying about Problems
        - Ask according to God's Will
        - Accept God's Will in Faith
      - Act on the Basis of God's Word to you.
- How to Pray Through A Problem
    1. Identify the Problem
    2. Turn to God for the Solutions to your problems
    3. Allow the Spirit to Illuminate a Scripture and Apply it to your Life
    4. Ask God to Answer Your Request based on the Revealed Word
    5. Accept God's Word in Faith
  - 6. Act on the Basis of God's Word to You
    - Defining Your Life Purpose
      - The Importance of Staying Focused
      - An Overarching Vision



- Discovering Your Purpose

- Setting Life Goals

Characteristics of Life Goals

1. Life goals are God-revealed rather than self-conceived

2. Life goals are too big to achieve without God's

3. Life's goals are life-arrangers

- Setting Priorities

"If you aim at nothing, you are likely to hit it."

1. The Foundation of Christ- Build and root your life in Jesus (1 Corinthians 3:11-13)

2. Personhood – God is concerned about you (1 Samuel 16:7)

3. Life Message – What do others see in your life? (Matthew 5:16)16

3. Ministry – it flows from your person and your life message (1 Peter 4:10)

4. Home – Your home is a vital part of your ministry. Christ is the foundation of a disciple's home and home relationships (1 Peter 3:7)

5. Daily Work – God can use you as an influence in your career or job (Colossians 3:23, 24)

- Standing Victoriously

Principle 1: Seeking God (2 Chron 20:1-4)

Principle 2: Knowing God (2 Chron 20:6)

Principle 3: Depending on God (2 Chron 20:14-15)

Principle 4: Believing God (2 Chron 20:20-21)

Principle 5: Worshipping God (2 Chron 20:25-28)

Source: MasterLife by Avery T. Willis  
and Sherrie Willis Brown

**APPENDIX I**  
**DISCIPLESHIP COURSE EVALUATION FORM**  
**CONVENT AVE. BAPTIST CHURCH DISCIPLESHIP COURSE**  
**Ten Week Session- Modified MasterLife Curriculum**  
**Sunday, April 29, 2012**

**SESSION EVALUATION FORM**

Thank you for participating in the Discipleship Course. Please complete this form to assist us in future course planning. Please answer the following questions on a scale of 1-5. 1 means Poor; 2 means Fair; 3 means Good; 4 means Very Good; 5 means Excellent

SESSION LEADERS: REV. C. FAISON, REV. C. McWHALES, AND  
DEACON E. BLAKE

(Please circle your answer)

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. The content of the course met my expectations.   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 2. The material was presented at my level.  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 3. The information presented in this session<br>will enhance my understanding of how I can<br>practice discipleship at church and other places. | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 4. I will be able to apply what I learned in this course<br>in my ministry of service.  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 5. There was ample opportunity for questions.   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 6. The length of the Course was appropriate.  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 7. Did the teachers have adequate knowledge of the<br>course material?  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 8. Would you recommend this course to others?   | Yes      No       |

Comments: (if you need more space, please write on back of this sheet)

**APPENDIX J**  
**DISCIPLESHIP COURSE MAKE-UP QUESTIONS**

**CONVENT AVE. BAPTIST CHURCH DISCIPLESHIP COURSE**  
**Ten Week Session- Modified MasterLife Curriculum**  
**Sunday, April 29, 2012**

**COURSE MAKE-UP INFORMATION**

**Thank you for participating in the Discipleship Course. If you missed a class, please complete the following questions for that class. A brief response in your own words to the question will be accepted. All make-up work must be turned in to teacher by Sunday, May 13, 2012. No certificate will be awarded until this work is completed. Thank you.**

**Introduction and Disciple's Cross**

<b>February 26, 2012</b>	<b>Question 1: What is Christian Discipleship?</b>
<b>March 4, 2012</b>	<b>Question 2: What are the six disciplines of</b>
<b>March 11, 2012</b>	<b>being a Disciple?</b>
	<b>Briefly explain each one.</b>

**The Disciple's Personality**

<b>March 18, 2012</b>	<b>Question 1: What is Christian Discipleship?</b>
<b>March 25, 2012</b>	<b>Question 2: How can you renew your mind?</b>
	<b>Question 3: How can you resist temptation?</b>

**The Disciple's Victory**

<b>April 1, 2012</b>	<b>Question 1: Explain Spiritual Warfare.</b>
<b>April 8, 2012</b>	<b>Question 2: Explain the Armor of God.</b>
	<b>(Ephesians 6:10-18)</b>

**The Disciple's Mission**

<b>April 15, 2012</b>	<b>Question 1: What is the Disciple's Mission?</b>
<b>April 22, 2012</b>	<b>Question 2: Explain how you would lead someone to Christ.</b>

**APPENDIX K**  
**DISCIPLESHIP COURSE BROCHURE**



## *YOUR QUESTIONS*



What is Christian Discipleship?

Why Is it Important?

How can I be more effective as a Disciple of Jesus Christ?

How can I make disciple of others?

How can I use the Spiritual Disciplines to become a more mature disciple?

What does a Spiritually Mature Disciple of Christ look like?

*ANSWERED IN THE DISCIPLESHIP COURSE*

# *CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP*



“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Amen”.  
Matthew 28:19-20

## **CONVENT AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH**

**420 West 145<sup>th</sup> Street**

**New York, NY 10031**

**Rev. Dr. Jesse T. Williams, Jr., Senior Pastor**

## *Christian Discipleship Course*

### What Does It Involve?

The Christian Discipleship Course is a twelve week condensed version of the MasterLife discipleship training program. This program is designed for new members and existing members. Jesus gave the church a mandate to make disciples who can make other disciples. This course will help you to become a mature disciple, one that Jesus will be proud of. You will also learn how to make other disciples.

A Certificate is awarded to all who complete the Discipleship Course.

When: Sunday, 9:30 A.M. - 10:30 A.M.

Where: Rev. Dr. John W. Saunders

Educational Bldg.-6<sup>th</sup> floor



## Course Topics

- The Disciple's Cross  
How to Practice Biblical Disciplines
- The Disciple's Personality  
How to Be More Like Christ
- The Disciple's Victory  
How you can Triumph Over the World and Satan
- The Disciple's Mission  
How to Measure your Spiritual Growth and be more Effective  
In Ministry

If you are interested in attending this course, Please Tear Off here and place form and give to an Usher or place in the Offering Basket on Sunday. Thank You.

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Yes, I am interested in The Discipleship Training Course. Sign Me Up.

My Name is: (Mr.) (Mrs.) (Ms.)

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Address

\_\_\_\_\_ Apt

. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State

\_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX L**  
**DISCIPLESHIP COURSE CERTIFICATE**



**APPENDIX M**  
**SERMONS**  
**“OVERCOMING DROUGHT”**

**Scripture: (1 Kings 18:1; 41-46)**

Drought is a familiar word in our vocabulary. We’ve heard it mentioned quite a bit recently. According to the National Weather Service, a drought is a period of unusually persistent dry weather that persist long enough to cause serious problems such as crop damage and or water supply shortages. When there is a shortage of rain and city and town water supplies run low, the land looks like a dry and thirsty land. The grass which was green is now burned and brown. The land is cracked and broken. Dryness pervades everything and the thirst for life giving waters grows to be very important. Such conditions of drought provide a powerful metaphor for our life.

Although, we can be a Christian, but there are times when feel like we are going through a great time of dryness, distress and trials in our lives. There is dryness when you lose that which gives meaning and importance to your life, such as a job or family. There is dryness when that which you were relying on, no longer satisfies you. There is dryness when your bank account evaporates and your assets become liabilities. There is dryness in your life when you no longer have joy in your heart. There is a dryness when you come to church week after week and sing the songs of Zion but there is no song in your heart. There is just dryness.

This dryness is not limited to individuals. There is a perplexity of time and dryness amongst nations, ethnic groups, politicians and individuals. There are all kinds of things happening in the world today. War, drug abuse, gang violence, rape, sexual

assault, murder, lack of regard for God and the Bible, lack of faith and yes, even dryness in the church which translates into a lack of enthusiasm in the church.

Sometimes you feel engulfed and overwhelmed by all of this dryness.

**But, I suggest to you today that you don't need to be engulfed or overwhelmed by this dryness. Even if there is a physical or spiritual drought in your life, God can provide some much needed rain in your life that will help you overcome your drought.** Just think about it for a moment, it is not unusual for a farmer to go through a terrible drought for a year or more and then have the greatest crop ever. What made the difference was RAIN.

Many have tried to make it rain. Some of you might remember a book written by John Grisham entitled, "The Rain Maker." "The Rain Maker" is about an insurance lawyer, powerful who could make any deal for a company. This lawyer projected an illusion of power, an illusion of being capable of great acts. But with all his power He is not God. For only God has All power in Heaven and Earth in His hand and Only God can make it rain. Rain is God's moisture from Heaven.

Before we look at our text for today, we have to refer back to 1 Kings Chapter 17, verse 1 where we see the prophet Elijah going into the presence of the Baal worshipping King Ahab and telling him that there would be no rain for several years. Just think about that for a moment. King Ahab had to be shocked. Ahab was the son of Omri and had ascended the throne of Israel in 875 B.C. and centered his government in the city of Samaria which became the capital of the kingdom of Israel.

Though Ahab was a resourceful ruler who made his country respected even by the warlike Assyrians who threatened its borders, what we remember most about Ahab is his

support for his dominating queen, Jezebel, who spread her cult of the Phoenician deities of Baal. One can assume that it was to Ahab's advantage to have a wife who linked him to the powerful and prosperous Phoenicians. (Sometimes people form un-holy alliances, but that's a sermon for a different day).

Ahab and Jezebel had set up a godless nation. The nation was so spiritually dry that God had made them physically dry. Whenever Godless people pursue Godless paths and try to prevent God's purpose and plans, that nation is spiritually dry. Ahab, nor Jezebel nor their false gods could cause it to rain. Though they worshiped Baal and believed he was the god who brought the rains and bountiful harvests. But none of these gods with the small g could bring rain.

When we look at Chapter 18 of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, where our Scripture text starts we see that the nation of Israel was in a time of terrible drought and famine. The people were in a beaten down and powerless state. There were dry and lifeless and depleted by the drought that God had brought upon the land. ....Sometimes we feel like we've been beaten down spiritually and there is no joy in our lives.

The people of Israel had seen much hunger and death that it was hard for them to recognize a fresh alternative in the face of Ahab's power. There was little faith and what there was of it was hiding in caves. The worship of Yahweh was virtually extinct, until one man; Elijah stood and challenged the people's lack of enthusiasm toward God.

Our text describes a true power encounter with God. God rests his credibility upon his ability to outperform the prophets of Baal. This brings us to Elijah the Mighty prophet of God who delivered God's message to King Ahab. Elijah was a man who had a great commitment to God. Elijah was on the scene with Moses and Jesus at the

Transfiguration. Elijah, was preserved during the famine. We all know the story of how he was preserved at the brook of Cherith where God had ravens feed him. He was preserved in Zarepath by a widow, who fed him, by giving of the last she had, which the Lord replenished.

Don't you know that God's provisions are not affected by drought? My Bible tells me that "my God will supply all my need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:19)

God is unchanged in times of drought. (Heb. 13:8) "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever."

Physical difficulties do not change God. Spiritual difficulties do not change God. God still loves us in times of drought. Romans 8: 38-39 tells me, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 18, verse 1 tells us that a long time had gone by and the word of Yahweh came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to King Ahab because I am about to send down rain on the earth again." So Elijah set off to present himself to Ahab.

Now since the famine in Samaria was worse than ever Ahab had summoned his palace manager, Obadiah to help him look for water and grass to keep the mules alive. (This Obadiah was a truly God-fearing man who when Jezebel was butchering the prophets of Yahweh hid one hundred of them in a cave and provided them with food and water.

While Ahab and Obadiah went different directions in search of water and grass, Obadiah came upon Elijah. Elijah was on his way to see Ahab. Obadiah knew the character of Ahab and for his own safety was reluctant to tell Ahab that Elijah wanted to see him. Finally, he took Elijah's message to King Ahab. Ahab went to meet with Elijah. When they met, Ahab called Elijah the curse of Israel. Elijah tells Ahab that he and his family are the curse of Israel because they have forsaken God's commandments and are following after Baal.

Ahab summoned the prophets of Baal to Mt. Carmel. The prophets were also called the priests because they were in charge of the religious cult activities. When they were assembled at Mt. Carmel, Elijah stepped forth and asked the people how long will they waiver between the two opinions, God or Baal? It was decision time for the people. Just as it is decision time for us. We have to decide whether or not to follow the true God and not false or idol gods. The people did not answer Elijah. The challenge was on. It involved the preparation of a bullock by the Baal prophets and one by Elijah. Both groups called on their god to light the fire under the bullocks.

The prophets of Baal cried out in vain. They prayed all morning. They prayed enthusiastically, leaping on the altar. They prayed sacrificially by cutting themselves. They prayed until evening, but No answer came.

Elijah prepared to pray. He repaired the altar of the Lord. He dug a trench around the altar. Then he piled fire wood neatly on it, cut up the bullock and laid wood over it. They poured full buckets of water over the wood. The trench was full. It was time for evening sacrifice. Elijah stepped toward the altar and prayed. All of a sudden God's lightening flashed down from heaven setting the carcass of the bullock and the

wood on fire. At the site of this, the people fell on their faces, yelling Yahweh is God. Then Elijah ordered the prophets of Baal to be rounded up and killed. God had shown that he is all powerful and the One True God. Only God could rain down fire on the water soaked altar.

Now Elijah said to Ahab, you can go and eat and drink, because I hear the sound of a mighty rain.

Elijah sends his weatherman (his servant) to scan the sky. Not a cloud to be seen. He went back and forth seven times. Elijah expected God to answer his prayer. Then a cloud of about the size of a man's hand appeared. That was all that Elijah needed. "He knew that the rain was coming." The physical and spiritual drought was to end. Just as this drought was going to end, we must look for ways to help us overcome our own droughts.

There are three brief points that I want to make about how to end a drought in our lives.

**Point No 1 - It is important to pray in faith.** Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6) Prayer changes attitudes and events. Prayer with faith can cause God to send down his moisture from Heaven. Elijah prayed and God answered with Fire and He answered with rain.

**Point No. 2 – Let go of your fears.** God is able to preserve you no matter what kind of drought you are going through. Just as he preserved Elijah and many others who had faith and trust in Him. Don't panic. Just think if Joshua had panicked, the walls of Jericho would have never fallen down. Just think if Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego

had panicked, they would not have been able to survive the fiery furnace. Just think if Paul and Silas had panicked they would have never had a prayer meeting in a Philippian jail at midnight. Just think if Jesus had panicked on the cross, he would have come down before they crucified Him and where would that have left us? It would have left us without hope, but Jesus didn't come down. Instead He said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Point No. 1 was It's important to Pray in Faith, Point No. 2 was Let Go of Your Fears.

**Point No. 3 is: Look for God's provision.** God has an abundance of everything we need. We all need rain in the natural sense, but more importantly we all need the Spiritual rain of God's Spirit and His blessings. Rain has always been a symbol of God's blessings as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

God wants us to have plenty of rain. The rain of His Spirit, The rain of His Blessings and the rain of His provision. God wants the rain to cover the earth so that there will be an abundance of harvest of souls.

Not only does God want us to have an abundance of Rain in our lives so that we can overcome the physical and spiritual droughts in our lives. He also wants us to have a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus the Christ. God gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life. So, if you don't know Jesus it's time that you got to know Him and accept Him as Lord and Savior. He can help you through your droughts.

If you already know Him and name Him as Lord and Savior of your life, I suggest that you hold to His unchanging hand.



Some of you are probably sitting here today and looking at me and saying, What drought is she talking about. Everything in my life is good; it's well watered and not dry. Well, I am here to tell you that if you live long enough, there are going to be some dry spells in your life and you are going to need Jesus, the Son of the Living God. You're going to need to hold onto His hand, his unchanging hand.

The hymn writer puts it like this:

“Time is filled with swift transition, Naught of earth, unmoved can stand. Build your hopes on things eternal. Hold to God's unchanging hand. Trust in Him who will not leave you, what so ever years may bring. If by earthly friends forsaken, still more closely to Him cling. Hold to God's Unchanging Hand, Hold to God's Unchanging Hand”<sup>40</sup>

God Bless You!!

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<sup>40</sup> *New Baptist Hymnal*

**“STAY IN THE RACE, IT AIN’T OVER YET”**

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

**It is that 24<sup>th</sup> verse of our text that I want to emphasize. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So Run, and that ye may obtain.”**

Someone once wrote that Life is a book with three volumes, **the Past, the Present and the Yet to be**. The First volume of Life is the past which is written and put away. The Second volume of Life is the one we are writing day by day. The Third Volume is locked away from sight and only God holds the key.

God has given us life and if we are Christians he will give us live more abundantly. He has given us instructions on how to live the Christian life in the Holy Bible.

The Bible is full of images that help us understand the Christian Life; it says we are part of the army of God and part of the body of Christ. We are Christ’s ambassadors, representing Him in the world. We are branches attached to Christ the vine. We are the bride to Christ. We are the salt of the earth and carry the light of the world. We are living stones being conformed to the image of Christ.

The Bible also compares the Christian Life to a Race. Each year we run another leg of the race. Each year should bring us closer to our goal. The Apostle Paul in our Scripture text uses the analogy of running a race to compare the Christian life. Perhaps he was thinking of the Grecian games and the Greek runner. For Paul there was a goal to reach and a crown to win. To him the Christian Life was not stationary, but steady, not motionless, but always moving. We only have to recall Paul’s words to the Corinthians

when he said, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain.

The Christian Life was never promised as an easy way to live. It can be one of constant conflict. We are locked in conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil. So much so that we can be easily become discouraged. Some people think that once they become a Christian, the road to Heaven will be easy. The Apostle Paul constantly reminds us through his writings in the Holy Bible, that living for Christ is not easy. He faced many obstacles as he lived the Christian Life and ran the Christian race and tried to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today is the 345<sup>th</sup> day of the year 2011. There are only 21 days left before the dawning of a new year. How have you run the Christian Race so far? Are You Still in the Race?

I’m sure that during the year, there were times when you thought that you were not going to make it. Life has taken its toll on a lot of us. All of us face the challenges of life. We’ve faced tests. We’ve faced disappointments. We’ve faced ups and downs. And With the economy being the way it is today, Life has thrown us a pretty powerful punch. Life might have knocked the breath out of us, but thanks be to God, we are still here.

Many of us are familiar with the colloquialism, the phrase, “It Ain’t Over.” Many of us identify it with the great New York Yankee, Yogi Berra who once uttered those words. Many of us identify the phrase with the Title of a Song sung by Maurette Brown-Clark. In her song she says **“I know the odds are stacked against you And it seems there’s no way out, I know the issue seems unchangeable And there’s no reason to**

**shout, but the impossible is God's chance to work a miracle, a miracle, so just know It Ain't over until God says it's over. He never said it would be easy But you're a winner in the end."**

The Apostle Paul knew something about this, when he said we are **Troubled on every side**, yet not distressed, **we are Perplexed**, but not in despair, **Persecuted**, but not forsaken; **Cast down**, but not destroyed.

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I submit to you today that, Christianity is not a passive religion and as Christians we are all called to run the Christian Race in a manner that pleases God and in a manner to win the ultimate prize, our Heavenly Reward. We are called to glorify God and witness to others about the goodness of Jesus and how he loves us and how He died for us that we may have eternal life and have it more abundantly. As believers in Jesus Christ we do not have a choice.

We are called to run the Christian Race in faith. We can't afford to drop out of the race, because to drop out means to separate ourselves from the Lord. We have to stay in the race.

It doesn't matter what the enemy is working out against you, or what you're struggling with. No weapon formed against you shall be able to prosper. The Bible does not say that the enemy would not form weapons against you, or that the enemy would not launch them at you, or that they would not touch you.

But what the Bible does say is: It shall not prosper; it shall not accomplish its intended purpose. In fact, the Bible tells us that, **"All things work together for good to them who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose."** (Romans 8:28)

It doesn't matter how spiritual you are, how hard you try to live right and how you try to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the enemy is going to deal you a blow, but remember GOD IS STILL IN CONTROL and he can pick you up, dust you off and put you back in the race. He can turn you around and plant your feet on solid ground, regardless of what your situation is.

I said GOD IS STILL IN CONTROL and he can pick you up, dust you off and put you back in the race. He can turn you around and plant your feet on solid ground. I wish I could get a few witnesses who wouldn't mind saying **God is Still in Charge and it's not over yet.**

Sometimes when running a foot race you have to adapt by changing your strategy, your thought process or your direction. Well, the same is true for running the Christian Race. There are three things we need to have to run this Christian Race and win our heavenly reward.

**The first thing we need is Discipline** (1 Cor. 9:24-25) Winning a race requires purpose and discipline. The Apostle Paul used the image of a race to explain that the Christian life takes hard work, self-denial and a lot of preparation. The race that the Apostle Paul was alluding to is the race that we as Christians are running toward our heavenly reward. Though, Paul used a competitive image, he was aware that the righteousness which matters was not the result of his own efforts but is God's gift through faith.

“For by grace we are saved by faith and not of ourselves: it is a gift of God not of works, lest any man should boast.”

When I think about a group of people who are disciplined, I think about astronauts. Astronauts are said to have the right stuff. They go through a rigorous training program in order to become disciplined people. Christian believers must also be disciplined. This discipline extends to our entire life. We must be disciplined in our devotional life, our Prayer life and our Bible study and worship. Being disciplined in these activities will help us to run the Christian Race with stamina and confidence. We shouldn't observe from the grandstand or the sidelines, we need to be active participants. We must be disciplined in what we think and what we say. And We have to be disciplined morally. We can't afford to lose or compromise our moral values. We must achieve self-control. "Temperate in all things." This is a lot easier said than done, unless, you are under the control of the Holy Spirit. We must be led by the Spirit and not the flesh. During this time of the year we should ensure that we under the control of the Holy Spirit as we go to the malls or stores to shop for Christmas presents. It is so easy to become aggravated when we have to wait on long lines because there is a shortage of cashiers. We have to be on our best behavior, because we have to remember that if we are reconciled with God, then we are ambassadors for Christ. The role of an ambassador is to take the message of the person who sent him or her. Ambassadors don't take their own personal message. A governmental ambassador delivering their own message can start a war or a big misunderstanding and where would that leave their home country. The ambassador wouldn't have any backing and would be recalled.

**The second thing we need in the Christian Race is Divine Direction** (Phil. 3:13-14). We cannot win by looking back. The Apostle Paul knew this. He knew that the prize given by Jesus to the faithful was worth more than the wreath that the Greek

runners received as a prize. We have to forget about the things that are behind. For instance we have to forget about old wrongs and wounds. As Philippians 3:13b says, “but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto things which are before. The Apostle Paul had reason to feel sorrowful about the past-for he was the one who held the coats of those who stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr. (Acts 7:57-58) We have all done things that we are ashamed of. There is always that tension between what we have been and what we want to be. Sometimes people won’t let you forget what you have been. They say remember when you were this or that. But I’m so glad, that Christ looked beyond my fault and saw my need. Because my hope is in Christ I can let go of the past and guilt and look forward to what He will help me to become. Don’t dwell on the past. Instead, grow in the knowledge of God by concentrating on your relationship with Him now. Know that you are forgiven, and then move on in the Christian race to a life of faith and obedience. Then you can look forward to a fuller and more meaningful life because of your hope in Christ. Stretch forward with anticipation, eagerly welcoming all spiritual challenges.

In this Christian Race we must not become weary. We must continue to have our hope and trust in Jesus Christ.

Like the songwriter says, “My hope is built on nothing else than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. “<sup>41</sup>

There is a story found in sermon illustrations about a pilot who was in the cockpit of his plane and sitting at the start of the runway ready for take-off. He received the go-ahead from the tower to take off and proceeded to do so. As the plane reached its

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<sup>41</sup> *New Baptist Hymnal.*

cruising altitude of 30, 000 feet the pilot locked in the auto pilot and opened the cabin door and proceeded to walk through the plane. As he reached the first row of the first class cabin, he noticed a snake (the enemy) sitting in the first row. He immediately retreated to the cockpit and told the Co-pilot what he had seen and also relayed this information to the control tower. The Control Tower (God) told him to take the plane to 60,000 feet. The pilot didn't want to do this. He wanted to descend and land the plane. After being persuaded by the Control Tower to climb to 60, 000 feet, he did so. When he went back to see what was going on with the snake, he found that the snake (the enemy was dead). The pilot didn't know that the snake couldn't survive at such a very high altitude. The Control Tower being God did know and showed how God is in control. God is in control of our lives, And just as God the Divine Creator gave Divine Direction in the Control Tower He will give us Divine Direction as we run this race.

**The third thing we need to run this Christian race is to be dressed for the race.** Just as we dress for the weather, we have to be dressed for the Christian Race. Like runners who dress lightly for a race and don't wear things that weigh them down, we need to live the Christian life without some of the weights we have. We need to shed those weights. The Scriptures tell us to lay aside every weight that so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us. We should lay aside those weights that drain our energy and slow us down or get us off course in the Christian life as we pursue the prize- our heavenly reward. Winners in the Greek games, the Pan-Hellenic games) only received a wreath of olive, wild celery, laurel and pine as their prize. When we run the Christian race successfully it will all be worth it, when we see Christ and receive our heavenly reward.



There are many things that hinder us as we run this Christian Race. J. Wilbur Chapman wrote, “Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible Study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian work more difficult is wrong for me.”

What’s hindering you as you run this Christian Race? What has you weighed down? Are you weighted down with cares? Sickness, finances, bad habits, joblessness, the wrong job, relationships that are not working the way they should? Are you weighed down by negativity? Negative people or negative things going on in the world. Are you weighed down by fears? fear of becoming older, fear of becoming ill, fear of unemployment, fear of dying. All of these things can be set aside if we trust in Jesus the Christ and remember, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthened, me.”

So my Brothers and my Sisters, as you move toward the end of this year and go forth to 2012, a year that we have never seen before, let us remember that in order to run and win this race called the Christian Life you must be **Disciplined**, you must have **Divine direction** and **you must lay aside** anything that weighs you down and keeps you from pleasing God and doing His will. **And if there is** someone here who is not in the Christian Race because you haven’t accepted Jesus as their personal Savior, I say to you it’s time to get in the Christian race. **You can’t win this race if you’re not in it.** You have to be in it to win it. I’m not talking about the Lotto or Mega Millions, either. I’m talking about the Christian Race and having faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

As an example of How to Run this Race, We only have to look to Jesus. The author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the

cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God the Father. He's there making intercession for you and for me.

**The Lord will guide your feet as you run this race. He will guide your tongue while you run this race, he will hold your hand while you run this race. The Lord will keep your running from being in vain.**

God did not remove trials from the Apostle Paul, but He did meet his needs. We need God's power to give us stamina and courage so that we can survive the blows of the enemy and be able to share Christ with others. For Christ was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

I don't know about you, but I serve a God who is God all by Himself and He can keep me and you in the race.

The Apostle Paul stayed in the race even though he had been persecuted on many occasions:

Five times he had received 39 lashes from the Jews.

Three times he was beaten with rods

Three times he suffered shipwrecks

Adrift both night and day on the open sea. He had been stoned at Lystra and drug out of the city and left for dead, but it wasn't over yet, God raised him up and he was still in the race. And as he finished his race, he could easily say, "I've fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

But there was another Man who is the only begotten Son of God. He ran His Race and ran it well. His race was a hard race that began in poverty in a stable in

Bethlehem, while shepherds tended their flock by night. His race ended in agony and pain on a Cross way out on Calvary.

His race led Him around a track lined with hatred, bitterness, opposition and the desire of some to see Him dead. He set a perfect example of how a race should be run. He never faltered. He never lost sight of the goal and He never quit running until the goal had been achieved.

He finished the course that was laid out before Him and now He stands as the Supreme Champion in the race of life.

And Because Jesus finished His course and has all power in Heaven and Earth in His hands, one day we'll see Him face to face. One day we have to stand in the judgment. We'll have to answer for how we've run our Christian Race. Mother won't be able to stand for you, Father, won't be able to stand for you. Your Sister not even your Brother won't be able to stand there for you. You'll have to stand there for yourself. Don't let anybody tell you that when you're dead it's over, because it's not over.

My Bible tells me that

After this life, there's a judgment that is sure to come. Every knee must bow and every tongue must confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. You've got to stand there for yourself. I know I'm right about it.

And as you stand there, the Lamb's Book of Life will be opened and your name has to be written in the Lamb's book of life and every person shall be judged and rewarded according to their works. Christians will also give an accounting of how they handled the gifts, opportunities and responsibilities given to them as recorded in the books.

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I don't know about you, but on that day as I stand there and my record is read, I want to hear, Well done thy good and faithful Servant.

Sometimes you got tired along the way. But you stayed in the race.

Sometimes you had cry all night long, But you stayed in the race.

Sometimes you had to stand alone, but you stayed in the race.

Sometimes you had to give up the right for the wrong, but you stayed in the race.

Sometimes you were buked and scorned, talked about as sure as you're born, but you stayed in the race.

Sometimes your faith was questioned, but you stayed in the race.

You kept on living the Christian life, you stayed in the race.

Servant well done. Come on in.

You've been faithful over a few things. Come on up a little higher. I'm going to make you ruler over many.

Saints, **STAY IN THE RACE! IT'S NOT OVER.** I don't know about you, but I'm going to stay in the race, because God's been good to me. Has He been good to you? Why don't you turn around and tell somebody, Stay in the Race, It's not over. I said, Why don't you turn around and tell somebody, Stay in the Race, It's not over, till God says it over.

God Bless You!

**APPENDIX N**  
**SERMON CRITIQUE LETTER AND FORM**

Dear Site Team Member,

Happy New Year to you and your family. May it be a blessed and prosperous one. Thank you for being a part of my site team. I thank God for you. As part of my Doctor of Ministry demonstration project in the area of the competencies that I have chosen for development in the area of preparing sermons that address contemporary concerns, with Biblical solutions to those concerns.

Enclosed please find two CDs that have a sermon on them that I developed and preached that I need you to critique. Also, enclosed for your use is a Sermon Critique form that I have developed to be used for your critique of the sermons.

Please pray, listen to the sermons and complete the critique form and return it to me by January 20, 2013.

Thanks in advance for your help.

Many Blessings,

Rev. Charlene D. Faison

## SERMON CRITIQUE FORM

Name of Preacher: Rev. Charlene D. Faison

Sermon Title:

---

Sermon Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please circle the number on a scale of 1-5, that most appropriately describes the attribute on the left.**

	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Weak</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
<b>Introduction:</b>					
Did it introduce the theme?	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Theme:</b>					
Is it relevant?	1	2	3	4	5
Is it Scripturally based?	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Outline:</b>					
Did sermon stay with the text and the theme?	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Development:</b>					
Was the theme fully developed?	1	2	3	4	5
Was there a good analysis of the text?	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Illustrations:</b>					
If any, were they helpful?	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The Sermon:</b>					
Did the sermon address Contemporary issues?	1	2	3	4	5
Did it offer Biblical solutions?	1	2	3	4	5
Overall Sermon Content:	1	2	3	4	5

**Comments?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

Dear Brother/Sister-in-Christ,

Happy New Year to you and your family. May it be a blessed and prosperous one.

Thank you for being a part of my church family. I thank God for you. As part of my Doctor of Ministry demonstration project in the area of the competencies that I have chosen for development in the area of preparing sermons that address contemporary concerns, with Biblical solutions to those concerns.

Enclosed please find two CDs that have a sermon on them that I developed and preached that I need you to critique. Also, enclosed for your use is a Sermon Critique form that I have developed to be used for your critique of the sermons.

Please pray, listen to the sermons and complete the critique form and return it to me by

January 20, 2013.

Thanks in advance for your help.

Many Blessings,

Rev. Charlene D. Faison

## APPENDIX O: ANNUAL REPORT

### Convent Avenue Baptist Church

Annual Report 2010 – 2011

*Unified and Hospitable*



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Fax: 212.234.6019  
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A special thanks to the church staff and volunteers for their work in preparing this Annual Report. We also thank each member and attendee for their gifts of time, talent, energy, and finances given to the ministry of Convent Avenue Baptist Church. Your continuing prayers and participation are crucial to reaching the community and the world for Jesus Christ.

Rev. Brenda Price and Tiana Bragg, Editors

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## Message from the Senior Pastor



Dear Convent Family:

It is my pleasure as Pastor to present to you the 2010-2011 annual report. It is important to know where we have been before we can go forward. This annual report is a compilation of your labors throughout the year. It stands as a testimony to what Jesus has done in the life of Convent Avenue Baptist Church; we are a changed people changing the community and the world through Jesus Christ. The Annual Report also stands as a witness to what this church will do going forward. It makes me proud to be the pastor of this great church.

I expect 2012 will prove to be an equally successful year. The Capital Campaign is moving along rapidly. We have broken ground on the sanctuary elevator and we expect it to be finished by the time of our next annual report.

Personally, I want to thank each member for making the great work at Convent Avenue Baptist Church continue to go forward in 2012 and on into the future.

God Bless You.

Rev. Dr. Jesse T. Williams, Jr.  
Senior Pastor

## LEADERSHIP REPORTS

### Executive Minister

Rev. James Logan



Well, another year has come and gone. However, the work and ministry of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, continues to move forward at Convent. As I reflect on the first six months of the year of 2012, it occurred to me that an obvious and yet subtle truth stands out: **the annual emphasis sets the tone for the year.**

In 2010 the emphasis was **Unity** and the scriptural support was Ephesians 4:1-16. Every ministry leader was charged with guiding their area of ministry to work together with other ministries throughout the year. There were several events that displayed the great value of partnering together with another ministry to accomplish similar goals. It became obvious that duplication of similar events were eliminated, there were larger turnouts, a better utilization of gifts from individuals in a

ministry, the fellowship was enhanced between each ministry, maximization of space, shared responsibilities and better management of ministry budgets.

2011 was the year of **Hospitality** and Romans 12:10-13 supported this theme. All members felt the important responsibility of being hospitable to everyone that came through the doors of the church and to everyone already in the church. This theme penetrated all ministries and every individual whether they were members or not, to treat everyone with the love and care of Jesus Christ. I would go as far to say that hospitality was shared from the pulpit on Sundays by our Senior Pastor, through his teaching on Wednesdays and during our Christian Education Week in such a way that everyone in the congregation felt the importance of treating each other, family members or anyone with love and respect as Jesus would also.

The annual emphasis for 2012 is **Spiritual Maturity** and the scriptural support is I Corinthians 3:1-3 and I Peter 4:8-9. It is clear that all of us are being challenged to grow in our walk with Christ. Spiritual growth should be an active desire done with intentionality. Through sermons, bible study and our spring revival, we have learned that one's age, title or length of church membership does not necessarily determine our level of spiritual maturity. We grow by reading, studying, meditating on and by listening to the Word of God. In addition, prayer, worship and fellowship are key components to spiritual maturity.

The yearly emphasis as set forth by our Senior Pastor charts the course for every ministry as well as the administration of the church. The emphasis used over the past three years was either one or two words but has the similar impact of a farmer planting seeds in a field. The fruit may not be seen immediately but God is at work churning the biblical foundation for the emphasis into the lives and fabric of everyone in the church. At some point we will see more of the fruit that started out as only one or two words in emphasis form. Therefore, let's keep being a unified, hospitable and spiritually mature church.

## **Chairman of the Deacon Board**

**Deacon Lawrence C. Hudson**

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Board of Deacons has continued our rich legacy of service to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Convent Avenue Baptist Church Family and to the community. We are co-laborers with our pastor, Dr. Rev. Jesse T. Williams, Jr. in keeping the God's peace and unity. We are humbly called and ordained to serve God's people. Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience is key for the Board of Deacons. This faith allows us to be God's vessel of love and hope and keeping Convent's themes of "Unified" and "Hospitable" uppermost in mind, to express God's love in numerous ways to you, our Convent Church Family and to the community.

Deacons are teachers of God's Word. We accept the mission from God which said "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:20). Specifically, we teach throughout the Board of Christian Education Ministries. We share our faith with the Children's, Youth, Young Adult, Seniors and New Members Ministries.

It has been and remains an honor to serve God and His people as Deacons. We are available to help our Convent Family and community in tangible ways of support, thus, Deacons visit members in times of need, at home, at hospital bedsides and Nursing homes. The Deacon Board also prayerfully and humbly administrated the Benevolent Fund Ministry.

Wishing you continued blessings! What a wonderful God we serve!

## **Chairman of the Board of Trustees**

**Deacon Calvin Martin**

Every member of the Board of Trustees has found a great deal of pleasure working with our esteem Pastor, the Reverend Doctor Jesse T. Williams, Jr. He has provided the kind of leadership that puts us in a good position to succeed. We have the responsibility of overseeing the church's finances, property and to provide good stewardship over the resources of the church. The Board is made up of both deacons and laypeople from the membership. The financial contributions from the members enable us to maintain the church and to forge new goals.

All of our properties are old including our main sanctuary. Therefore, an inordinate amount of our financial gifts are used for repairs and renovations. It becomes increasingly difficult for the Board to maintain a comfortable level of operating capital. However, we have been able to keep our properties usable. The Board of Trustee was able to replace the chairs in the choir loft, install a state of the art sound system, improve our multi-media room, renovate our baptismal pool, and repair the female Deacon's room due to water damage. Renovations took place in 354 Convent Avenue and 402 West 145th Street. Additionally, we hosted our annual cleanup day where members of the congregation assisted in cleaning both sanctuaries and bathrooms.

We were able to add two new tenants to one of our properties and signed a new lease with our tenant at 354 Convent Avenue. Furthermore, our capital campaign efforts are alive and doing relative well. The capital campaign has allowed us to forge ahead with the installation of the elevator. That project is still in progress. Let me pause to thank the church for allowing us to solicit Capital One Bank for a line of credit (loan). We were granted the loan Friday October 5th 2012. Again thanks!

Most importantly we have been able to assist all of our ministries in carrying out their missions. We believe that the gospel must go forward regardless of the obstacles and hurdles. It is through our ministries that the mission of the church is realized.

## **Minister of Evangelism**

**Rev. Booker T. Morgan**



The goal of the Evangelism and associated ministries that I oversee (New Members Orientation, Spiritual Big Brother/Big Sister and the Evangelism Ministry) is to witness, love, and comfort people for Jesus Christ. The work of evangelism includes the Home Going Services Ministry, which provides comfort to the bereaved, as well as arranging the many home going services held at Convent. Thousands of lives have been touched by the presence of the ushers, church members, Music Ministry, deacons and ministerial staff. Approximately 40 services were held last year at Convent.

The New Members Orientation Ministry is another area of evangelism. The purpose is to love and guide those who have newly joined Convent into the basics of the Christian faith, and to become familiar with the ministries and what we believe at Convent. Classes are held each Sunday morning and Thursday evening. Last year, over 100 new members were fellowshipped into our church. This is just some of the exciting work that the Lord is doing here, and we will continue to labor together to the glory of God. You can learn more about the Evangelism Ministry and the spiritual Big Brother/Sister later in the Annual Report.

I along with, Rev. Logan and Rev. Price plan to continue to visit the sick providing prayer support to those in the hospital, nursing home and homebound in the year to come.

## **Minister of Social Services**

**Rev. Brenda Price**



Historically, the Ministry of Social Services has had a place in the Black Church in general, and at Convent, in particular. Caring for the many needs of the church's members and the community is a ministry not taken lightly but with love and compassion. The Ministry of Social Services addresses four areas of concern: Advocacy Care for clients of all ages, Community Education, the Senior Citizen Advocacy and Monitoring Program (S.C.A.M.P.), and Grief and Supportive Counseling.

The year 2010 was difficult for many people with some improvement for 2011. As the economy continued to languish, people sought ways to stretch their finances to meet their needs—with housing, employment, and health care concerns being the major issues. The Ministry worked with approximately 50 clients monthly to help them obtain information, forms and access to entitlements which would best meet their needs.

Community Education and outreach was provided through the annual Yes We Care! Community Fair and Blood Drive. Our focus for the year was housing concerns and health care. Agencies that participated provided written and verbal information in addition to free health screenings (blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol, HIV testing, and eye care to mention a few). Furthermore, the new voting machines were on display and demonstrations made for the community; over 25 vendors serviced 200 people for the two years. In 2010 and 2011, 23 and 14 pints of blood were collected through the NYC Blood Center Blood Drive. Free tax preparation was provided for the community during the spring.

- 8 -

S.C.A.M.P. is a uniquely rewarding program to both Convent members over the age of 80 and their monitors. Two-thirds of Convent's S.C.A.M.P. members had a monitor that would check in with them on a monthly basis. The program has 27 monitors assigned to an average of five seniors. The annual Golden Gospel Brunch for S.C.A.M.P. members was host to 125 S.C.A.M.P.s and their guests.

My office provides counseling services, and has heard the testimonies of how the Lord has victoriously brought people through difficult circumstances and overwhelming odds. It has been an incredible experience to watch God at work. It also gives reason to why Convent will continue to provide the necessary social services to benefit both its members and the community.

As Minister of Social Services I look forward to another year of serving my church and my community.

## **Minister of Music**

**Dr. Gregory Hopkins**



The philosophy behind the ministry is the worship and praise of God, the edification of the church and the call of sinners to repentance. The Worship Support Ministries of the church seek to assure that a holy atmosphere and mood are set for the adoration of our God in the Divine Services. It is made up of the Music Ministry, the Nurses Ministry, and the Ushers Ministry.

### **Music Ministry**

This ministry assures that we are led in praise with worshipful music for all of the services of the church. We seek in song not only to praise and worship the Lord, but also to edify the church and call sinners to repentance. Four adult choirs and two children and youth choirs alternately provide music for the services. In 2010, we celebrated our first ever All Choirs Day in expression of the "Unity" theme. This replaced separate anniversary observances. Our choirs have ministered to the community, patients and residents throughout the year, including: The Bronx VA Hospital, The NYC Rescue Mission Shelter, Northern Manhattan Rehabilitation and Nursing Home, as well as on the steps of Convent. We want to continue to show hospitality every time we go outside of Convent to sing the Lord's praises.

### **Nurses Ministry**

The Nurses Ministry, a part of the United Missionary Baptist Associate Nurses Auxiliary, provides training and workshops on how the nurses of the church should serve those who need medical assistance. These nurses show the image of God through assisting His people, being reliable, kind, praying constantly and studying the Bible regularly. We hope to have a city-wide training on proper church nursing.

### **Ushers Ministry**

The ushers have the responsibility to "meet, greet, and seat" members and visitors at every service, 52 weeks a year, 3-5 services a week. They fellowshiped with other churches throughout the year. There are 4 adult boards and 2 children boards that rotate throughout the month in order to minister to the needs of the congregation. Ushers also serve at funerals.



## MINISTRY REPORTS

### BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

**Rev. Charlene Faison, Chairperson**



The Lord is still in the blessing business here at Convent. He is still empowering us to serve His people through many ministries that operate under the auspices of the Board of Christian Education. The Scripture in 2 Timothy 2:15 tell us to study to show ourselves approved unto God, to not be ashamed of our work and to be able to handle the Word of God. The Board of Christian Education's mission and ministry are to enable and equip persons to learn and apply Biblical content to contemporary and personal experiences.

The Board also sponsors board-level programs such as Christian Education Week and the Annual Graduates Luncheon. Our 2011 theme was "Hospitality Starts With You." Our scriptural references were Romans 12:10-13 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. Although approximately 150 persons participated in Christian Education Week in 2010 and 2011, the effectiveness of our service is not measured by the numbers we serve, but by the spiritual transformation that takes place in the lives of those who study the Word of God, and participate in other ministries under the Board of Christian Education.

In 2010 and 2011, we achieved a lot of goals, including restarting the Teacher Training Program and the Discipleship Training Program. I am happy to report that the Teacher Training Program graduated 9 new teachers in 2011, and the new 10-week Discipleship Training Program graduated 24 students. The Board's new goals include increased participation of adults, children and youth in Christian Education Week.

The Board of Christian Education is dedicated to providing as many opportunities and venues as possible for the study of God's Word. This helps us to develop a fruitful and personal relationship with Jesus the Christ, who is our Savior, our Lord and soon coming King. So Convent, let's continue to study the Word of God, serve Him, serve His people and His creation.

### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION REPORTS

#### Afro-American Experience Forum (AAEF)

Our ministry celebrates and shed light on the important milestones and events of African-Americans. On the eve of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 83rd birthday, we gathered CABC members and guests in the Lecture Hall to observe this occasion. During the celebration, we screened *The Witness: From the Balcony of Room 306*, a documentary on the last hours of Dr. King Jr.'s life. Throughout the year, we also recognized African-American History Month by showing a special screening of *Red Tails*, a film about a crew of African-American pilots in the Tuskegee training program. We celebrated Women's History Month with performances of music, dance and poetry by talented CABC members, as well as saluting 4 phenomenal women as trailblazers in Consumer Education, Leadership, Healthcare, Human Services and Mentoring. Furthermore, we hosted an exhibit on prominent African-American women in American history, presented the HBCU Fair, participated in the Annual Mission Fair, and celebrated Kwanzaa.

#### **Appreciation Ministry**

For the past 15 years, we provided worship services at the Bronx Park Nursing Home. When asked, we served repast meals for church members' home going services. In addition, we served evening meals during Christian Education Week at Convent, decorated the church for the Christmas season, and twice a year we provided leadership to the Wednesday Prayer Meeting Service. We endeavor to do no less by the help of God, and every year we ask Him to bless us on each and everything that we do.

#### **Baby Dedication Ministry**

One of the great joys of CABC is to see growing families. As Baptists we do not believe in infant baptism. The children are dedicated to the Lord as seen in Mark 10:13-16 where parents brought their children to Jesus to be blessed. For the year 2010 and 2011, 28 and 17 babies were dedicated to the Lord for a total of 45 infants and children.

#### **Chenaniah Dance Ministry**



Chenaniah dancers perform at the S.C.A.M.P. Golden Gospel Lunch

Our ministry is for girls aged 6-16 who want to worship and praise God through dance. We minister in the lower sanctuary every second Sunday and to other programs at CABC (i.e., Children's Ministry Block Party, Children's Day, Saturday Children's Fellowship, etc.), as well as other churches. The ministry started with 3 girls and God has blessed us to grow to 18. Students learn the Biblical principles for dance ministry, and are trained and encouraged to use their gifts for the honor and glory of the King. We plan to prepare more children in the dance ministry to do solo and duet renditions, add more American Sign Language renditions, incorporate scripture memorization, minister to more places as the Lord leads, and invite the members of our four sister churches to worship with Convent.

#### **Children's Ministry**

The Children's Ministry mission is to meet the needs of children and establish/strengthen their relationship with Jesus Christ. The Ministry provided activities to incorporate our children in the life of CABC. The Children's Ministry collaborated with the Sick & Shut-In Ministry to sing to the shut-ins that were transported to 11 am service. They also made "We Care For You" cards for them. We have held our Annual Children's Ministry Block Party, which was open to the community and the church. Our ministry participated in *Operation Christmas Child*, a global Christmas gift exchange project operated by Samaritan's Purse—a non-denominational, evangelical Christian organization that works worldwide to assist people in physical need, alongside their Christian missionary work. We sent 30 boxes filled with toiletries, small toys, school items, and the Word of God to children living in Albania and the Ukraine.



Annual Children's Ministry Block Party

#### **Chosen Youth Ministry**

The Chosen Youth Ministry is to be biblically functioning community of students and leaders gripped by Jesus Christ's love acceptance and forgiveness. We seek to be catalysts for transforming the lives of young people by leading them into a faith relationship with Jesus Christ, helping them experience God's healing, to love God and others, and equip them to carry Christ's mission to affect change wherever they are. After the weekly Children and Youth worship services, our youth (ages 13-18) meet for Baptist Youth Fellowship (BYF) in

the Pierson Youth Building, where they fellowship together as they explore biblical topics for Christian youth development. At church, we held the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Back to School J.A.M., the annual Youth Sunday Service, and during the weekly Children and Youth worship service, we provided Survival Kits to graduating high school seniors who were active in the ministry. The Survival Kits consisted of backpacks filled with toiletries, a study Bible, stationary, snacks and other supplies that young people may need as they move onto the next stage in their lives.



Youths taking a break

Other activities have included taking 28 youth to Battlecry Youth (considered one of the world's largest youth conference), and attending the 29<sup>th</sup> American Baptist Church Youth Convocation. Looking forward, we have secured a new Director of Youth Ministry who will seek to fulfill the mission and vision of the Chosen Youth Ministry.

#### **Church-Wide Outing Committee**

Our ultimate goal is to encourage more CABC members to attend our annual church-wide fellowship outing, where we socialize with each other over food, games, and to just genuinely have a good time. We wanted members and their friends to join us in fellowship beyond the wall of the church. Last year, we had 5 buses transport 55 passengers each to the state park, while approximately 25 members traveled by cars. The ministry kept the price at a minimal so that more people would be able to attend. We reached out to several ministry leaders of the church to seek representatives from their ministry to support the outing by making a commitment to attend. Moreover, we would like to see our committee come together at least once a year to fellowship, because this will make the ministry stronger.

#### **Hallal Dance Ministry**

This ministry has touched countless lives by ministering the gospel through dance to Convent as well as the community. Our ministry has increased its membership from 4 to 14, and incorporated 4-5 new pieces to our repertoire this past year. We've collaborated with the Chenaniah Dance Ministry, Living Word Ministry and the Women's Day Choir during Family Day and Women's Day at CABC to provide inspiring worship in different mediums. We'll aspire to continue ministering to CABC, the community and other churches through dance, as well as look for new opportunities of collaboration.

#### **Living Word Ministry**

Our mission is to magnify the Lord by prayerfully studying, internalizing, memorizing and delivering scripture to the congregation and ministries of Convent and other congregations where we are invited. We have increased membership and our repertoire with 10 new scripture renderings. We had the opportunity to worship with several ministries at Convent—Sick and Shut-In Ministry, Women's Ministry, Yes We Care, Children's Ministry and the Senior Citizen Ministry, carrying out the church's theme of "Unity" and "Hospitality." In the next year, we plan to continue to spread the Word of God through mass media, look into additional presentations for our youth in the Children & Youth Worship Service, and visit and present the Word to more churches, both locally and internationally.

#### **Marriage Ministry**

The Marriage Ministry of CABC endeavors to provide biblically-based counseling and support for couples who are preparing for marriage, have made a commitment to protecting and fortifying their marriage, and are overcoming the common challenges experienced in marriage. Our ministry provides pre-marital/marital counseling, weddings and marriage ceremonies and Matters of the Heart (MOTH) Couples Fellowship to numerous couples in the church and community. Internally, we sponsored family movie nights, and the annual sponsorship of the Marriage and Singles Conference, bringing our church family together in unison. We will

continue to equip husbands and wives to reflect the relationship of Christ and the church in their marriage as instructed in Ephesians 5, and to build a strong foundation for the family and the community.

#### **Mentoring Ministry**

Our mission is to promote educational, cultural, personal and spiritual development of young people ages 8-18. This is achieved through one-on-one and group planned programs and activities. The Renaissance Debutante Program provides young ladies with an opportunity to develop Christian values, etiquette, social graces, self-confidence, as well as explore cultural and career opportunities. Last year, at our 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Renaissance Program and Cotillion, the crowned winner and the two runners up received a generous monetary award for their achievements. Our ministry also sponsored and facilitated an apple picking event for many children and adults. Our goals for the next year are to develop and implement a Rites of Passage Program for young men, recruit more mentors and mentees into the ministry to carry out the next Debutante program.

#### **Multimedia Ministry**

The Multimedia Ministry works at a level of excellence to ensure that our members and visitors can hear and feel the Word at the highest possible sound quality. Our ministry has accomplished many things in the past year. We've improved the sound quality of the live audio stream of Convent's Sunday service, and we are seeing an average of 50 listeners during each service. In addition, we are now able to incorporate Bible verses and titles to our DVD recordings, and have new camera equipment that allows our ministry to handle new members' photos in-house. As we continue to improve the overall efficiency of the Multimedia Ministry, we strive to have live visual streaming of our Sunday service that will be PC and Mac compatible, as well as being able to sell CDs and DVDs online.

#### **Parents' Ministry**

The mission of the Parents' Ministry is to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth, through Christ-centered leadership and guidance to parents and caregivers. We take serious the scripture that says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Proverbs 22:6. In the past year we enjoyed a visit to the Sight and Sound Theatre, while in-house we presented a college-bound workshop for parents and high school students. The Parents' Ministry also sponsors a child abroad through the World Vision program.

#### **Progressive Ministry**

Our mission is to raise funds to provide college scholarships for the youth and other Convent members, thereby keeping the John W. and Mary Ella Saunders scholarship legacy alive. Each year we create prayer booklets and packets for the Lenten Season and scholarship donation rally. In the fall last year, we presented a musical extravaganza scholarship drive. Through our efforts, we raised \$4,228 to benefit the scholarship fund, and were able to give out 20 scholarships with each applicant receiving \$750. Moving forward, we hope to raise more funds so as to provide more scholarships for our members, especially our youth.

#### **Saturday Children's Fellowship (SCF)**

The SCF ministry serves as a building block for our children's future by offering an array of free programs designed to encourage their academic, emotional and spiritual growth. In addition to Bible Study, Manners & Etiquette, Reading, Math, Computer Literacy, Speech, Drama, School Readiness, and Ethnic Group Studies, we have our Christmas Celebration where the children participate in a play about the birth of Jesus Christ. SCF also took the kids to the Sight and Sound Theatre in Lancaster, PA. Classes are held on Saturdays (except for the 5th Saturday of the month), from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., for children ages 4 to 12. A light lunch is provided. In the 2010-2011 study year, we had 30 kids registered for our program, with 25 participating throughout the entire year.

### Senior Citizen Ministry

The Senior Citizen Ministry hosted the Mother's Day Tea where we brought 25 ministries and four generations of families together for a day of fellowship; thus providing spiritual and social fellowship to over 200 persons. We honored more than 25 women from the various ministries as "Mothers of the Year." On Senior Saint's Day, 5 senior members from the congregation were recognized by the Pastor, celebrating their outstanding dedication and contribution of service to the church.

### Spiritual Big Brother/Big Sister

Spiritual Big Brother/Big Sister's goal under the leadership of Rev. Booker T. Morgan is to love and help the new members feel comfortable in a large church such as Convent. We are unified and hospitable in our commitment to our church and our new members. During the year, over 100 new members were assigned a Big Brother or Big Sister. Lifelong friends are being built as our new members find their purpose and ministry at CABC.



Rev. Williams at the Spiritual Big Brother/Big Sister's New Members Luncheon

### Sunday Church School

Our Sunday School Department has increased 10% each year to include approximately 500 students and teachers. We've increased our participation at the Annual Teacher's Retreat with 55 participants. The Teachers' Retreat is an event where the teaching staff of Convent explores different teaching methods and styles with an effort to strengthen our relationship with our students and learn new techniques to enhance our skills. The Sunday Church School service project, to support the Community Food Pantry, was most successful during November, when members brought in food items each Sunday of the month. In addition to the November drive, members in several classes continued to contribute food throughout the year. Our goals are to have consistent Sunday School attendance, with classes starting on time and demonstrating a welcoming learning environment. We will work with the Trustees to obtain additional space for 1-3 new Sunday School classes for our growing population.

### Willing Workers

Willing Workers collect food for the pantry bi-monthly and volunteer with the Minister of Social Services to assist in the Senior Citizens Advocacy & Monitoring Program (S.C.A.M.P.). Willing Workers carried out their duties for the Senior Saints by visiting them at nursing homes such as Amsterdam Nursing Home (Manhattan), Isabella Nursing Home (Manhattan) and Jewish Nursing Home (Bronx).

### Young Adult Ministry (YAM)



Young Adult Ministry's New Members Social

The YAM held quarterly New Member Socials for young adults (18-49) new to CABC. We spent May-July introducing ourselves to young adults after 11 am service as a means of connecting with them. The socials allowed for fellowship and served as an opportunity to assist in bridging members into ministries of their interest. During YAM Week, we co-hosted Good Friday service with the Voices of Convent. Each year we are responsible for "God Did It!" a New Year's Eve celebration of what God has done in our lives.

## BOARD OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

Deacon Lawrence C. Hudson, Chairman

The mission and ministry of Jesus Christ is not dead but alive in the Convent Avenue Baptist Church community. In addition to the various ministry exercises carried out at different times during the year, the Mission Board conducts major outreach ventures. In the spring and fall of the year, there is a small scale community outreach consisting with the objective to reaching people of the surrounding communities of our church. The groups of ministries each have a theme and their goal is to witness the love of Christ, helping those in their time of need (i.e. The Homeless Ministry donating clothing, the Evangelism Ministry distributing Christian tracts—the Word of God—or the Prayer Ministry offering prayers, comfort and encouragement).

"Launch Sunday," our church-wide mission outreach, is conducted on the second Sunday of September. In its 24<sup>th</sup> year, the Annual Mission Fair has all ministries of Convent gather on the street in front of the church. Each ministry displayed their yearly activities and provided sign-up sheets for recruiting new members into the ministry. This is an all-day event with more than 35 to 40 different groups.

## CHRISTIAN MISSIONS REPORTS

### CARING MINISTRIES

#### Comfort (Bereavement) Ministry

As a ministry designed to provide care for members who have suffered loss of a loved one, we reached out yearly to approximately 50 families who experienced this loss. We sent letters of condolences, letters of resolutions, and sympathy cards to these families at the time of the funeral. Both here in New York and throughout the country, we made follow-up calls and correspondence of encouragement in the months after of the loss. We expect to sponsor a memorial service for the bereaved family members of our church and community next year.

#### Healing Hope Ministry



Healing Hope in the community

Healing Hope Ministry was blessed with a prolific year. We were awarded once again the New York City Council Faith Base HIV/AIDS Initiative Grant in the amount of \$10,000.00. With this grant initiative, Healing Hope was able to carry out its mission to make available onsite free HIV testing, to conduct educational workshops concerning HIV prevention, as well as tending to the spiritual needs of the Convent family and the community with our new office. The ministry can now engage in the much-needed private, personal and confidential conversations concerning HIV to members of the church as well as the community. Healing Hope Ministry provides free HIV testing on the second Tuesday of each month to the congregation and the community. We believe with "Healing Hope" that one day the end of HIV/AIDS will come with the "healing of the land," 2 Chronicles 7:14.

#### **Sick and Shut-In Ministry**

An average of 350 visits was made yearly to members who were sick at home and/or in medical facilities. Twice a year the shut-ins and their caregivers were transported to church for the 11:00a.m. worship service, served communion, lunch and a gift bag. During the past Christmas season some 80 Christmas baskets are delivered to those sick at home as well as residents of nursing facilities. We work closely with the Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinner Committee carrying 45 dinners from the church to the sick and shut-in and their caregivers. Going forward this ministry will continue to collaborate with other ministries to serve God's people more effectively and efficiently by increasing the number of persons we visit at home and in hospitals and nursing facilities.

#### **Stephens Ministry**

Here at Convent, there are presently 6 leaders and 12 trained and commissioned Stephen Ministers ready to serve our congregation; this includes the 3 recently commissioned candidates. Stephen Ministers provide strictly confidential one to one distinctively Christian care to those persons experiencing various types of life's crisis. Stephen Ministers are committed to walk with care receivers as long as needed, showing the love and the compassion of Jesus Christ.

#### **Substance Abuse Ministry**

Substance Abuse Ministry Slave Of None (S.A.M.S.O.N.) was conceived in March 1996 when during an altar call several men came forth as an outward testimony of God delivering them from drugs and alcohol. During the review period, S.A.M.S.O.N. has ministered to over 50 individuals and families by providing sustainable referral information, and helped place 5 individuals in treatment and/or housing facility programs. We have partnered with Carry On Community Development Corporation, an auxiliary of Convent Avenue Baptist Church, and Pivot Ministries, an 18-24 month inpatient rehabilitation facility located in Bridgeport, CT to continue these aims.

### **SOCIAL CONCERNS MINISTRIES**

#### **Food Pantry**

The CABC Food Pantry has been serving the community since 1985. The pantry is open to the neighborhood Mondays and Thursdays from 9:00a.m. to 12:00 noon. In 2011, in addition to numerous financial and physical gifts from members, \$19,588 was received from 3 grants allowing us to serve 390 to 430 clients per month. Due to government budget cuts, the number of people serviced by our pantry in 2011 decreased, although the need increased. Working along with the Homeless Ministry, men, women and children's clothing are distributed during pantry hours. On the third Monday of each month Harlem Hospital provided a health screening team to check blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes. Pantry workers are also pursuing training in Food Stamps eligibility to better educate our community patrons. For the coming year, more private sector grants are being explored along with donations from the church membership.

#### **Homeless Ministry**

Our scriptural motivation is "Naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and you came unto me" Matthew 25:26. The Homeless Ministry has adopted two shelters in the Harlem Community, as well as sponsored an annual Christmas Celebration and worship service for those families residing in our adopted shelters, providing a hot lunch, the good news of Jesus Christ and toys/games for all ages of children. For the past 20 years on the 4th Saturday of each month, members of the ministry volunteer their time and talent

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Homeless Ministry outreach

at the NYC Rescue Mission in lower Manhattan. The Homeless Ministry is pleased to have Rev. Morgan and the Male Choir join us in ministering to the residents each month. Clothing is distributed weekly with the Food Pantry as well as during periodic outreaches in the community. We have unified with other church ministries to make our presence known in the NYC subway and streets distributing care packages of toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap and other personal time to the homeless. We look forward to an increased presence in the community for future years.

#### **Men's Ministry**

Our mission is to unite and support the men of Convent socially, intellectually, emotionally and most importantly spiritually in Christ. We serve our church and aggressively share the gospel moving the Pastor's vision forward. In the past two years the Men's Ministry held their annual Men's Prayer Breakfast and added a Health Workshop this last year. Our fishing trip to Hyannis Port boasted 100 men, women and children, and a whole lot of porgies. We hope to accomplish a job fair for our church members and the community going forward.



Men's Fishing Trip

#### **Prison Ministry**

During the year 2010-2011 the prison ministry was actively involved with keeping the Word of our Savior "I was in prison and you visited me" true by visiting the juveniles in the New York City Juvenile Detention Center and adults on Rikers Island. Our two most significant accomplishments are as follows: First, in the wake of the Troy David wrongful execution, we began to bring attention to the injustices African-Americans and Latinos disproportionately suffer in the dominant culture, and advocate for the son of one of our members who is wrongly imprisoned in a Florida state prison. Secondly, during the Christmas season we were blessed to minister to 38 families including 25 children, with at least one incarcerated parent. We had a delicious fellowship meal where we remembered the true spirit of Christmas with songs, storytelling and the gospel of the Nativity. We were able to pray with the families and lead people to Christ.

#### **Women's Ministry**

The Women's Ministry, formerly the Women's Missionary Fellowship, acts to provide a community and fellowship where women are encouraged to develop deeper personal relationships with Jesus Christ, enhance personal development, growth and build relationships with other women in the church body. We are committed to missions and service to the community and to the world. We host the Annual Women's "Time Out" Retreat, our yearly Prayer Breakfast, and Women's Day Celebration.

### **OUTREACH MINISTRIES**

#### **Employment Ministry**

Our ministry hosted a Job Readiness Workshop with the Evangelism and Business Empowerment Ministries as well as outside job training organizations. Reverends James B. Logan and Charles Butler conducted workshops, while the U.S. Census gave job information. Two people became members of our church while in the process of seeking employment. They are currently employed. One person, who was on the verge of losing her home, was able to find day-to-day employment, eventually got a part time job, plus federal assistance and has remained in her home. Currently job alerts are distributed mostly by email notification. Very few are notified of job vacancies by telephone any more. Over 300 persons are known to have been ministered to and many have received jobs (full-time, part-time or temporary). The list continues to grow daily. The goal for 2012 is to make the information on jobs and training more accessible to the community by sharing announcements at other churches and community events. We are currently working to add the Employment



Ministry to the Convent Avenue Baptist Church website to make the information readily available. We are still committed to working with other ministries and have set a goal of 2 training sessions and resume writing sessions next year. We will be reaching out to the other Ministries in all events.

#### **Evangelism Ministry**

In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus gives the great commission to spread the gospel throughout the world, and we have made that our mission. We have touched over 10,000 lives this year through the distribution of gospel tracts by the entire church. The ministry, under the leadership of Rev. Morgan, teamed up with several of the church ministries to provide prayer and outreach with our Prayer Station. Bi-monthly, the Evangelism Ministry had the privilege of ministering at the NYC Rescue Mission. Hundreds of homeless men's lives were touched and over 70 men gave their lives to Christ! We also have the wonderful privilege to carry out the *Walk for Jesus* yearly, where we take the witness of Jesus Christ to the community. The ministry was privileged to hold two 13-week Evangelism Explosion training courses that impacted the participants both personally in the church and at home.



Members Walk for Jesus

#### **Stewardship 300 Ministry**

We have the responsibility of keeping before the congregation the commitment we have to God as stewards of our tithes, time and talents. We conducted a number of "Abolish Debt" seminars; as a result, some participants became debt free within a six-month period. We also held a "Joys of Tithing" seminar and conducted stewardship seminars on behalf of the Capital Campaign to different church ministries (i.e., Young Adult, Youth Ministry, Women's Ministry, Healing Hope and the Male Ushers). We organized Black History Month concerts featuring performers such as Requithelia Allen, Ken Hanson and the Peace and Serenity Choir. We shall continue to strive for 100% congregational participation in tithing along with educating the congregation through financial counseling seminars.

#### **Umoja (Ministry of International Visitation & Foreign Mission)**

Umoja is a relatively new ministry, we began in 2009. Umoja is motivated to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with the gift of hospitality and foreign missions. Each year we welcome international visitors to our church; greeting and providing them with information about our services in their language. In this past year 5,166 visitors worshipped with our congregation, with 25% of our visitors coming from French speaking countries, many of whom have seen our website or heard our service via the Internet. This is a decided increase from 2010.



Umoja member greets international visitors

We also serve as missionaries through our affiliation with Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission. Looking at 2012 and beyond, we hope to liaison with Lott Carey to increase our foreign mission exposure. One high point of Umoja's service to CABC and the community was to hold the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. 50 years after the United Nations called for the *Suppression of the Traffic of Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others*, we are still fighting to end human trafficking (serfdom, debt bondage, forced and bonded labor, trafficking of women and children, domestic slavery and forced prostitution of women and children, etc.) in this country and around the world.

### Yes We Care!

We are a social action ministry which seeks through social actions programs to promote the caring concerns of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church in response to the critical issues of the day. Yes We Care! has combined its efforts with the CABC Minister of Social Services to address the myriad of social needs in our church and community by sponsoring an annual Yes We Care Community Fair. During the past two years, the Fair averaged approximately 100 participants along with local social service agencies. We provided health screenings (including blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol, foot health, breast health, and diabetes) and community advocacy (housing clinic and job information). We partnered with other ministries (Healing Hope, Prayer Ministry; and Women's Ministry) to make this happen. Yes We Care! also presented an Easter Concert with the assistance of Dr. Gregory Hopkins, Minister of Music. We presented the Peace and Serenity choir directed by Kenneth Smith as well as some fine home grown talent from CABC to celebrate the wonder of Jesus Christ's resurrection.



Yes We Care! Community Fair

## CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

### *Let's Come Together*

**Deacon Mary D. Redd, Chairperson**

The Deacons, Trustees, Senior Staff and several other church leaders met at the Vision and Planning Retreat back in November 2008 to determine the most critical needs of the church. Through rigorous discussion, the group outlined a number of projects that we agreed were critical to the church's mission and growth. We developed the two million dollar *Let's Come Together Capital Campaign*. The four proposed projects represent Phase I of a multi-year, multi-phase plan to build up the church.

Phase I covers the following four areas: 1)Purchase and install an elevator for the Main Sanctuary building; that would service the Lower Sanctuary, Street level, Sanctuary level, and Balcony level; 2)invest in a new state-of-the-art sound system for the main sanctuary building; 3)complete projects that will make the Educational building compliant with ADA and safety standards; and, 4)renovate/rehab all bathrooms in the Church building and on the first floor of the Educational building.

As of September 30, 2011, 64 three year pledges were completed in two years as follows:

3- Platinum Supporters \$25,000 and up	2- Silver Supporters \$15,000 - \$19,999	1- Bronze Supporter \$10,000 - \$14,999
3- Pearl Supporters \$5,000 - \$9,999	14- Dr. Saunders Supporters \$2,500 - \$4,999	3- Dr. Wilson Supporters \$1,500 - \$2,499
21- Dr. Grant Supporters \$750 - \$1,499	16- Sustainer Supporters \$250 - \$749	1- Children and Youth Supporter \$52 - \$250

Ground breaking is scheduled for 2012. Each ministry is committed to praying three times a day for its successful completion. As one member said, "*Pray, Pledge, Pay,*" you are graciously invited to contribute to the Capital Campaign.



Renderings of Elevator Building



## A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF CONVENT



Evangelism Ministry sets up a Prayer Station



Revs. Raquel St. Clair and Lydell Lettsome say "I do"



YAM's visit to the White House



Spring Revival



Prison Ministry's rally against gang violence



Pastor Williams and Rev. Logan at Mission Fair



Children and Youth at the Block Party



Rev. Price at the Community Fair



Dr. Hopkins and Rev. Morgan



YAM at the *Lupus Walk*



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First Lady Williams and Lloyd Harrison, Church Clerk

## **APPENDIX P**

### **GREETINGS FROM THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION,**

Praise the Lord Saints. The Lord is still in the blessing business, here at Convent. He is still empowering us to serve His people through many ministries that operate under the auspices of the Board of Christian Education. These ministries include the Sunday Church School, the Adult Ministry groups, the Young Adult Ministry, the Children's Ministry, the Chosen Youth Ministry, the Afro American Experience Forum, the Saturday Children's Fellowship, the Hallal Dance Ministry, the Spiritual Big Brothers and Big Sisters Ministry, the Baby Dedication Ministry, the Parent's Ministry, and the Church-Wide Outing Committee.

The Board of Christian Education's mission and ministry is to enable and equip persons to learn and apply Biblical content to contemporary and personal experiences. The Board also sponsors board level programs such as Christian Education week and the annual Graduates' luncheon.

The effectiveness of our service is not measured by the numbers we serve, but by the spiritual transformation that takes place in the lives of those who study the Word of God and participate in other ministries under the Board of Christian Education. The Scripture in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:15 tells us to, Study to show ourselves approved unto God and to not be ashamed of our work and to be able to handle the Word of God.

During Christian Education week in September 2011, approximately 150 persons participated in Christian Education week. Our theme was "Hospitality Starts with You." Our Scriptural reference was Romans 12:10-13 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. Our keynote lecturer was Rev. Dr. V. DuWayne Battle. Many other esteemed Pastors participated as facilitators. Our 2010 theme was "Church Unity" based Scripture in Ephesians 4:1-16 and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:1-31. Our key note lecturer was the Rev. Dr. Barbara Austin-Lucas. In 2011, twenty-eight infants and children were dedicated to the Lord. This was a slight increase over 2010.

The Board of Christian Education had several goals for 2010 and 2011. These goals included restarting the Teacher Training Program and the Foundations for Christian Living Course. I am happy to report that the Teacher Training Program graduated nine new teachers in 2011 and the new ten week Discipleship Training Program which replaced Foundations for Christian Living graduated 24 students on May 20, 2012. The Board's goals for 2012 include increased participation of Adults, Children and Youth in Christian Education Week. To that end we have some special sessions planned for Christian Ed Week in September 2012.

The Board of Christian Education is dedicated to providing as many opportunities and venues as possible for the study of God's Word. The consistent and diligent study of God's Word is vital to us as Christian believers regardless of our spiritual maturity. Study of God's Word helps us to develop a fruitful and personal relationship with Jesus the Christ, who is our Savior, our Lord and soon coming King. So, Convent let's continue to study the Word of God, serve Him, serve His people and His creation.

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